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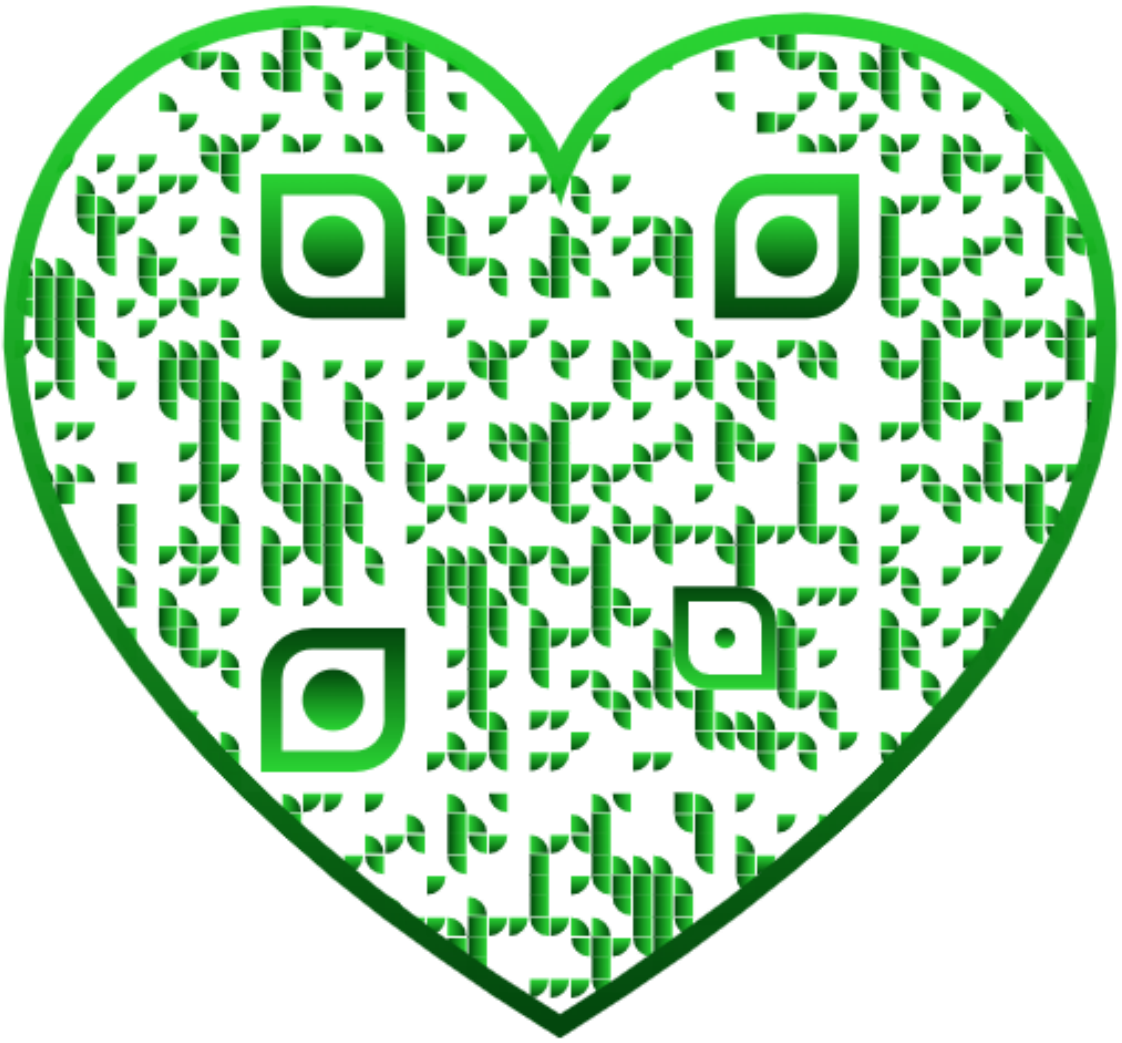

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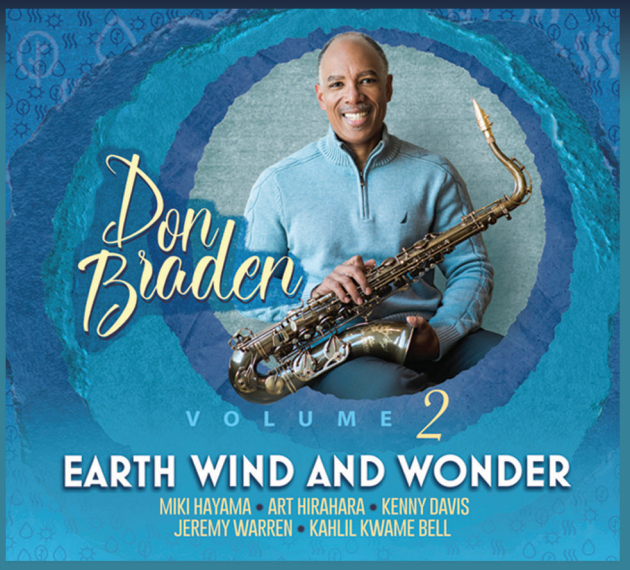

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71st ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

ON THE COVER

20 Alice Coltrane
Enters the DB Hall of Fame

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Alice McLeod Coltrane Turiyasangitananda (1937-2007) enters the DownBeat Hall of Fame for her groundbreaking contributions to jazz composition and performance, leaving behind an impressive oeuvre of eclectic works and a hallowed legacy.

Cover photo of Alice Coltrane by J. Emilio Flores/Getty Images

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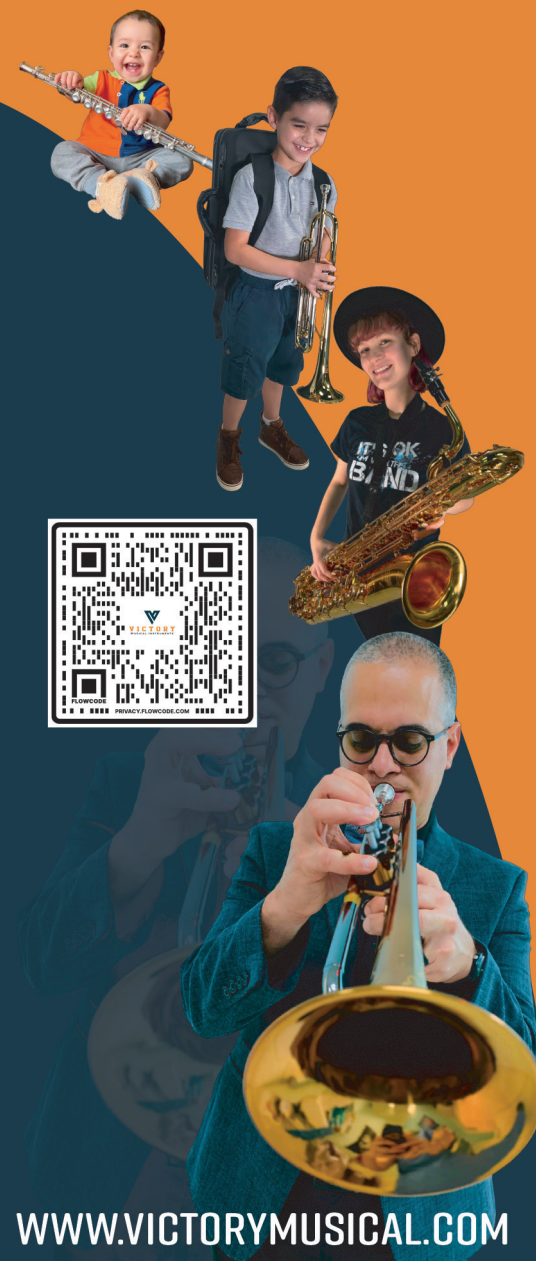

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C. ANDREW HOVAN

Alice Coltrane, ahead of her time.

Women to the Fore

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT ALICE Coltrane, this year's Hall of Fame honoree in the 71st Annual DownBeat Critics Poll, never appeared on the cover of this magazine before now. In fact, there is no major feature to speak of either.

She created music with humble devotion, largely in the shadow of her husband John, who just happens to be one of the most endearing and enduring artists this music, or any other, has ever heard.

She created music as a woman during a time when jazz was a massively male dominated art form.

And, she created music that spread well beyond jazz into the realms of spiritualism in a way that, frankly, was well ahead of her time. This magazine even dissed Coltrane calling her harp and piano playing "unsuitable" for conveying her husband's sound in the late '60s.

But now, the world has caught up with the beauty of Alice Coltrane as a musician, composer and artist, be it behind a keyboard or embracing a harp. How things have changed. Jazz is truly a world music and much of the Eastern spiritualism Alice Coltrane brought to her art is now understood, appreciated and beloved. It's music that soothes and uplifts the soul, especially during trying times.

There has been a resurgence in the popularity of her music, one led by the next generation of artists and listeners. Among those cheering Coltrane's legacy are the likes of harpist Brandee Younger (honoree for Miscellaneous Instrument in this year's poll), saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin and multi-instrumentalist Emma-Jean Thackray. That has led to recent popular reissues of her albums such as *Journey In Satchhidananda,* featuring Pharoah Sanders; *Ptah, The El Daoud* and *Kirtan: Turiya Sings* (all three on Impulse!) — and more.

All of this is happening at a time when women are claiming their rightful place as equals in this art form as audiences are listening and saying, "Hell, yes," to the music they are putting down. Of the 63 categories in this year's Critic's Poll, 25 were won by women. That is the most ever in a DownBeat poll, by far.

Give credit to those who have worked so hard for so many years to make this music more inclusive, none more important than Terri Lyne Carrington, this year's honoree for Group of the Year (with her band Social Science) and Drummer of the Year. Carrington, as the founder and artistic director of Berklee College of Music's Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, has calmly and doggedly been an essential leader in this movement to ensure that all artists pursuing jazz have an opportunity to shine.

Is this music at a point of equity yet? No. But there has been change for the better. It's the kind of change that might make Alice Coltrane smile.

All of this brings up an interesting point about the Critics Poll, one that comes up for debate in our offices annually. In the case of vocalists, DB has always had categories for male and female vocalists, which creates quite a head-scratcher for us. No other category in the poll breaks out by sex. There is no Male Alto Saxophonist of the Year or Female Percussionist of the Year. So, why in the vocal categories? And what about our artists who identify beyond the pronouns of he and she? We've kept the separate categories to this point, but understand that they are quaint, to say the least. We'd love to hear your views on this. Email me at editor@downbeat.com.

With that caveat, enjoy this year's poll. With 1,251 listings, there is much to explore and so many great artists to hear! It's a wonderful snapshot of the jazz scene today. **DB**

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Chords & Discords

Bouquets for Benny

I was pleasantly surprised to see the article/interview with Benny Green in the July issue. It's been a long time since I have seen anything about him, so it was great to get this update. Hopefully one of the Chicago area venues will book him for his solo piano show. Also thank you, Frank Alkyer, for introducing another rapidly rising star, Isaiah J. Thompson. Frank's First Take article and record review of Isaiah were very good and got my attention. The other day I bought a ticket for the John Pizzarelli Trio gig in August, mainly to see Isaiah. I also really enjoyed reading the Wes Montgomery Blindfold Test from the DownBeat archive. Very interesting reading his take on other guitarists' records. Thank you for another great issue.

MARC NEBOZENKO
EVANSTON ILLINOIS

Benny Green's Solo Mastery

BENNY GREEN'S 22ND ALBUM, *SOLO* (Sunnyside), dropped in May, a month after his 60th birthday. The work documents the master pianist in transition. Recorded over two days last December, it's a 40-minute recital comprising two Green originals and choice cuts by pianists Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson, Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris, Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons, McCoy Tyner, Cedar Walton and James Williams. Green's time is rock-steady, his attitude reflective, probing, melody-centric and emotionally transparent, like the five unaccompanied selections he plays on Fender Rhodes on *Solo*'s immediate predecessor, *Remry's Gift*.

Both dates diverge dramatically from Green's dozen or so piano trio albums since 1991, when Blue Note released *Greens*, the first of a trilogy by Green's tightly choreographed trio with bassist Christian McBride (then 19) and drummer Carl Allen, then his bandmates with Freddie Hubbard, who Green joined after four years with Betty Carter and two years with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. These albums introduced Green to an international audience, among them numerous Gen X and Millennial piano luminaries of the future. They were attracted to Green's fluid, virtuosic chops; his ridiculously fast lines amalgamating Bud Powell's kinetricism and Phineas Newborn's vertiginous parallel octaves; his embrace of blues-infused soul-jazz and heart-on-the-sleeve balladry à la Gene Harris; and his signature American Songbook interpretations that privilege storytelling over abstraction.

Between 1992 and 1997, Green brought his voice to the Ray Brown Trio, raising his profile via six albums and much touring. Oscar Peterson took notice, and gave Green the signal honor of inviting him to make a two-piano album in 1998. Peterson's influence suffuses Green's previous unaccompanied recital, *Green's Blues*, from 2002, a 12-piece program of primarily good old good ones, and albums by a working trio with McBride and guitarist Russell Malone in 1999 and 2000.

Then Green took a decade-long hiatus from the trio format. "During the '90s, I became unwittingly a bit formulaic," he said at his New York hotel the day before joining McBride, Malone and Cécile McLorin Salvant at a Steinway Hall benefit concert for McBride's Jazz House Kids organization. "It was on a major record label, getting a lot of attention, which I hadn't planned for. I developed a mindset that, whatever I was doing on a record that people liked or was getting airplay, I should make sure I do it on the next record. I wanted to invoke enthusiasm from the audience without really being intent on deepening my content."

Green didn't release his next trio album, *The Source*, until 2010; there followed, in short order, *Magic Beans* and *Live In Santa Cruz*. He presented some two-dozen tunes channeling the inflamed spirit of hardcore bebop, refracting into blooms detailed regret the respective vocabularies of heroes like Powell, Elmo Hope, Kenny Drew, Horace Silver, Sonny Clark, and also Walter Bishop Jr. and Walter Davis Jr., who taught him privately during the '80s.

"I wanted to be more of a classicist than some of the more progressive thinkers of my generation — really studying those old records," Green said.

More Archives!

I would like to express my disappointment with the very limited scope of the DownBeat archives. Historical editions of Down Beat are a vitally important source of information for jazz history. There seem to be no archives on the internet that reproduce these historical editions (back to 1934) of DownBeat, including on the DownBeat website. There was a great source of historical DownBeats on the website earlyradiohistory.com, but they have been removed. DownBeat is the only magazine that has not allowed reproduction of historical editions on that website. This means that most of DownBeat's historical information is completely unavailable for reference and research purposes.

REGARDS,
ROBERT WITTE
VIA EMAIL

Editor's Note: We're happy to announce that we recently digitized the entire DownBeat archive, and we're developing a delivery method to get those issues out there. But we will not allow people to just post the work for free as if it was their own. The folks who made these magazines worked too hard to have them poached.

Wayne Confusion

As a subscriber since the mid-'70s, I find your magazine as enlightening as ever, and it is consistently exposing me to unexpected gems amid the diverse mass of new music available these days. As a musician, I find Jimi Durso's transcriptions consistently enlightening — and am really digging the discovery of Amir ElSaffar in his June 2023 column. Also, I'm really enjoying the new Tineke Postma and Theo Croker releases.

It's also a pleasure to see so many veteran jazz writers gathered in the magazine these days. Howard Mandel is always a must-read, but I was surprised by his comment in the review of Postma's *Aria* (Edition), which received four stars, referencing "Wayne Shorter with Miles in the '70s." I've searched my comprehensive Miles collection — including numerous bootlegs — and could find just one instance of Shorter playing with Miles after 1969 (*Live At The Fillmore East*, March 7, 1970). Perhaps he meant late '60s? Or are there other examples of the two in the '70s?

MARTIN WISCKOL
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Editor's Note: That should have been the 1960s. Thanks for the correction.

Corrections & Clarifications

We hate errors — hate them! But they sneak into the magazine from time to time. We apologize for any and all mistakes you might find in DownBeat, including the following:

- In the July issue, "Work Song" was incorrectly credited to Cannonball Adderley. Of course Nat Adderley, his brother, wrote this classic.
- Correcting a Final Bar obituary on Kidd Jordan in the July issue, noted critic Geraldine Wyckoff points out that the famed New Orleans saxophonist taught at Southern University, New Orleans, and it "wouldn't hurt to add that in 1975 he co-founded the Improvisational Arts Quintet with drummer Alvin Fielder and played regularly with bassist William Parker and percussionist Hamid Drake." Duly noted.

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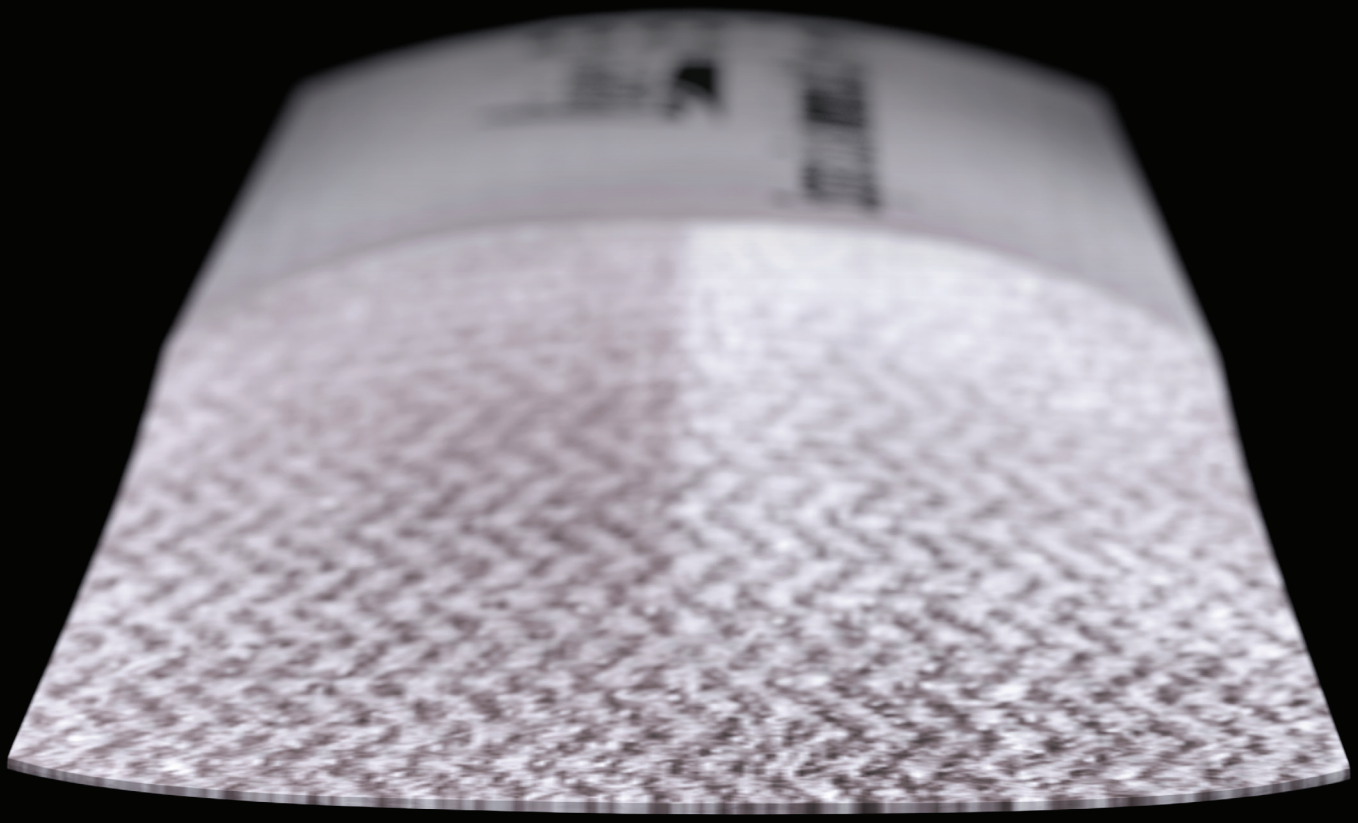

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EUGENE PETRUSHANSKIY

Person's esthetic took shape in an era when jazz functioned as neighborhood social entertainment and moved with a deep dance groove.

Houston Person's Foot-Tapping Soul

When tenor saxophone soul maestro Houston Person talks about his life and career — like the time he was studying at the Hartt Conservatory, in Connecticut, and wound up playing with Coleman Hawkins — he often drops in a self-effacing phrase like, "I got lucky," then erupts in a hearty laugh.

Don't let that "aw, shucks" manner fool you. This 88-year-old veteran may make everything sound as breezy as his svelte 2013 album *Nice'n'Easy*, but that distinct, throaty sound and effortless-sounding solo style developed not through luck, but serious study, smarts and grit. As did his 60-plus-year career as a self-managed, working musician who has toured five continents and released 75 albums as a leader.

"It just grew and grew," Person insists, seeming to shrug as he speaks on the phone from his home on Long Island, New York. "I enjoy it. I have no complaints."

Person shows few signs of slowing down. He recently produced and co-released *I Want A Little Boy*, with infectious San Francisco singer Kim Nalley (and guest vocalist Maria Muldaur), which they showcased for an adoring crowd at last year's Monterey Jazz Festival. Nalley, who used to own Jazz at Pearl's in the City by the Bay, started working with Person in the '90s, but in some ways had known him all her life.

"When he was going to school, he knew my grandmother, who used to hang out at after-hours sessions in New Haven," where Arthur Prysock and Jimmy Scott were regu-

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lars, recalls Nalley. "It was quite a lively Black scene back in those days."

Person's esthetic took shape in that era, when jazz functioned as neighborhood social entertainment and moved with a deep dance groove — finger-popping fast or bunny-hug slow, a time when soloists never let you forget the melody and when the saxophone sounded like it was making love to you.

"Once he gets hold of a tune, he's going to make you cry, or wiggle in your seat and tap your toe," says Nalley, who's right there with him on *I Want A Little Boy*.

She brings the sexy 12/8 torch song "Never Let Me Go" to a growling, yodeling climax (à la Gil Scott-Heron); nails the unusual ballad "It's All In The Game" (a hit for the Four Tops); and channels a bit of Dinah Washington on "Try A Little Tenderness."

Nalley and Person also have another connection. She wrote a Ph.D. dissertation about African-American musicians in post-World War II Germany, a cohort that included Person himself, who was stationed in Heidelberg with the Air Force in the late '50s. There, the saxophonist often sat in with players in the 7th Army band, like Cedar Walton, Eddie Harris and Leo Wright. Person's 1968 Prestige album with Walton, *Blue Odyssey*, is an unsung mainstream classic.

Last year, Person also issued *Reminiscing At Rudy's*, a swinging quintet nod to the great producer Rudy Van Gelder (1924–2016), whose fabled Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, studio has hosted dozens of Person sessions over the years, including the tenor saxophonist's first recording as a leader, 1967's *Underground Soul!* (Prestige), featuring organist Charles Boston, trombonist Mark Levine and drummer Frank Jones.

Recorded for his longtime label home, HighNote, the ballads-heavy *Reminiscing At Rudy's* features Person with guitarist Russell Malone, bassist Mathew Parish, pianist Larry Fuller and drummer Lewis Nash.

On Percy Mayfield's "Please Send Me Someone To Love," the saxophonist testifies over Fuller's funky tremolo; crystallizes the sweetness of Walton's ballad, "I'll Let You Know"; takes Paul Anka's teenybopper plea "Put Your Head On My Shoulder" to a plausible place it's never known; and gooses Henry Mancini's waltz "Moon River" into swinging 4/4 with a chipper, clipped delivery.

"Everybody's been calling me about that," says Person. "I've been playing it that way forever."

For Person, "forever" is only half hyperbole. Raised in Florence, South Carolina — Arthur Prysock country — in the 1930s, Person took up saxophone at 17, then played in the big band at South Carolina State College before enlisting in the service. After classical training at Hartt, where his classmates included bassist Ron McClure and vocalist Dionne Warwick, Person was hired by organist Johnny "Hammond" Smith, recording nine albums with him for Riverside and Prestige from 1963 to '70.

The popularity of B-3 groups insulated Person from the '60s assault of rock on the jazz market and probably also reinforced his sense of jazz as entertainment.

"The organ stayed closer to the values of what we considered jazz music, which was dance music and having fun," Person says. "If you take the dance out of it, people go elsewhere."

Prestige picked up Person as a leader in 1966. *Underground Soul!* was followed by nine more albums, two of which — *Person To Person* and *Houston Express* — were re-released in 1996 as part of Prestige's Legends of Acid Jazz series.

Person also starred on one of the most durable Billboard-charted R&B albums of the late '60s, Charles Earland's *Black Talk*, which, among other crossovers, funkified "Aquarius," from the musical *Hair*.

Etta Jones had already made a name for herself with her 1960 hit "Don't Go To Strangers" when she and Person solidified their intermittent musical (though not personal) partnership, in 1973. The pair went on to tour and recorded together for more than a quarter of a century, snagging Grammy nominations twice, for *Save Your Love For Me* (1980) and *My Buddy: Etta Jones Sings the Songs of Buddy Johnson* (1998).

Person not only toured and recorded with Jones, who died in 2001, he produced her albums, a role he also has taken on for Joey DeFrancisco, Lafayette Harris, Red Holloway, David "Fathead" Newman, Ernie Andrews, Earland and many others.

Person credits Van Gelder for teaching him a lot about production by example: "Help gather the personnel, take care of administrative duties, make things comfortable. These are some of the greatest musicians in the world. Then just stay out of the way and let them create."

Says Barney Fields, who succeeded his father, Joe, at HighNote when he passed in 2017, "It's all about the tunes. They fit a certain groove. They're danceable. Soulful. Cedar Walton knows what tunes he wants to do, but with Houston, there's a respect. He's done it. And he's very efficient, timewise. He gets things done."

At 88, you might think Person would consider kicking back a bit.

"I say I'm going to do it," he confesses. "And it sounds good, it sounds logical. But then somebody calls and I say yes."

—Paul de Barros

Review: *Ramsey Lewis: Gentleman of Jazz*

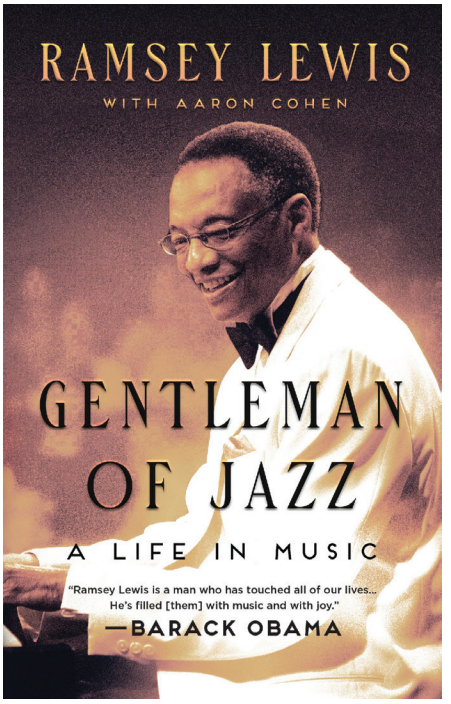
"I'M NOT GOING TO BE AROUND FOREVER and ever," Ramsey Lewis told his co-author Aaron Cohen as they were planning the pianist's memoir. "I would like something left behind that tells my story." Those words carried unforseeable prescience, for Lewis, 87, died peacefully of natural causes on Sept. 12, 2022, at home in Chicago, leaving behind his wife, Jan, two daughters and three sons as well as an autobiography he would not live to see published.

Known for being an effective communicator of jazz as much as a performer of it, Lewis' final words resound off the page with his trademark clarity and warmth in *Gentleman of Jazz*. He details his life's journey from a young boy in the Cabrini Homes housing projects on Chicago's North side — one who was fascinated both by classical piano and gospel music — to becoming a talented jazz pianist who successfully crossed over into the burgeoning soul-funk scene in the late '60s and '70s. Lewis emerged as an important ambassador of jazz to the general public as a radio and television host, becoming a beloved musical icon in the Windy City.

Lewis' 1956 debut recording at age 21, *Ramsey Lewis And His Gentle-Men Of Swing* (Argo), was released the same year as *Duke Ellington At Newport*, *The Unique Thelonious Monk*, Sonny Rollins' *Tenor Madness* and *Clifford Brown And Max Roach At Basin Street*. Nine years later in 1965, when Lewis released his breakout single "The In Crowd" from the live album of the same name, other current albums included Herbie Hancock's *Maiden Voyage*, Horace Silver's *Song For My Father*, Wayne Shorter's *Juju* and John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. And yet, it was Lewis' trio that produced one of the most popular hits of the year when "The In Crowd" spent six weeks in the top 10 of the Billboard pop charts. Therein begat a fundamental conundrum that would dog Lewis' entire career. Despite his undeniable popular and commercial success, he was rarely considered alongside the hallowed names in jazz such as those he is mentioned with in the same sentences above.

Lewis, who early in his career played with Roach, Sonny Stitt, Hank Mobley and Kenny Dorham, among others, alludes to his placement outside the in-crowd of jazz only obliquely in his memoir. For the most part, he chooses not to rebut his critics head-on, focusing instead on the many accomplishments he had achieved throughout his life and career.

He details encounters with brothers Leonard and Phil Chess, who signed the pianist to Argo,



a subsidiary of their blues record label, Chess Records, and how they even manufactured a "rivalry" between him and their other big keyboard star, Ahmad Jamal, to generate buzz and controversy. He reminisces about gig life in and around Chicago, as when he and his trio were the intermission band at the famed London House for George Shearing or Oscar Peterson, or when after a road gig in Detroit, the Rev. C.L. Franklin invited them over to his house to meet his family and have one of his daughters, Aretha, sing and play piano for them.

Lewis lets his original drummer, Redd Holt, explain how — through the suggestion of a waitress Holt was flirting with — they decided to add "The In Crowd," an R&B song by Dobie Gray they heard on the jukebox, to their set for the live recording they were about to do the next evening.

The overwhelming response catapulted the group, and they became one of the greatest keyboard-driven cover bands in history. Lewis converted into his own, funky style — from Chopin's E minor Prelude to soul hits by Marvin Gaye and the Stylistics, to the *White Album* by the Beatles.

Lewis also outlines his relationship with Holt's successor, Maurice White, then a young house drummer for Chess, whom Lewis coaxed out of his shell to learn to become an entertainer, an invaluable trait once White branched out to co-create Earth, Wind & Fire. Tracing Lewis' discography through this time as he talks about his ongoing interactions with White and his superstar band provides a clear window into the close fraternity they had built and the particular sounds they produced as a result. "It's questionable if there would be an Earth, Wind & Fire if it had not been for Maurice's experiences with Ramsey Lewis," Phillip Bailey, the lead singer for that iconic band, told Cohen.

In a recurring theme throughout the book, Lewis shares his feelings on how he felt as a Black man in America. He remembers as a kid watching a white man reprimand his grandfather, telling him, "Boy, why don't you watch where you're goin'?" Lewis said of the incident, "The way he looked at my grandfather and spoke to him broke my heart." He remembers his piano teacher frankly admitting to his family that there were few opportunities for Black classical pianists, and that Lewis, even as talented as he was, had a better shot at a career in some other type of music. Elsewhere, he describes the disconnect between the color of his skin and his status as a musical celebrity:

When people say, "Oh, you're the entertainer," then that's a different thing. But if you're just a Black guy waiting to get in somewhere … you understand that you're a Black guy. You don't get the same privileges. "Why didn't you tell me you're Ramsey Lewis?" Why should I have to tell you?

Recollections like this help to explain Lewis' dedication to the Black community in Chicago, including his early friendship with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and his later support for a young lawmaker from his state who would eventually become a U.S. Senator and then President of the United States. Lewis channeled Obama's message of hope into *Proclamation Of Hope: A Symphonic Poem*, an eight-movement suite for piano and a smaller orchestral ensemble in honor of the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth in 2009. That led to his culminating masterwork, "Concerto For Jazz Trio And Orchestra," which he performed in 2015 for his 80th birthday with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

In the end, Ramsey Lewis' story is one of transcendence, from a classical piano-loving kid from the housing projects to composing for and performing with symphonies, from jazz pianist to crossover pop-funk sensation, from "just a Black guy" to aiding the most powerful Black guy in the world, realizing himself as a beacon of hope to others. Just as they did when he uttered them on television or radio, the words Lewis left behind in his memoir will assuredly continue to educate and inspire as his music has." —*Gary Fukushima*

Isaiah Collier leads his band, The Chosen Few, during the world premiere of *Memoirs of Jazz in the Alley*. Inset: the South Chicago Dance Theatre.

Isaiah Collier Creates for This Time

ACCOLADES KEEP ROLLING IN FOR ISAIAH Collier. He performed at the White House in 2016, wrote a commissioned piece for the 2019 Hyde Park Jazz Festival in Chicago and saw his 2021 album *Cosmic Transitions* (Division 81) receive a five-star review in DownBeat. Now, he has topped the category Rising Star Tenor Saxophone in the DownBeat Critics Poll. But the 24-year-old hasn't let any of these honors inflate his ego.

"Accolades are the same thing as a record," Collier told DownBeat in early June. "To me, it's a progress log, [something] that allowed me to reach that thing, and to make room for the next height. I'm not one to be complacent. We used to talk about, 'What does it mean when you get the call?' We used to emphasize, 'Oh, I got the gig!' But there is a saying that applies to everyone, throughout the industry: It's not about you getting the call — it's about the callback."

Collier has displayed impressive artistic ambition throughout his brief career. His 2019 project *The Story Of 400 Years* was an interdisciplinary work that shone a light on the African Diaspora, featuring original compositions, 14 musicians, four dancers and choreography by Kennedy Banks.

Collier, who grew up in Chicago, recently collaborated on another dance production, this time with director and choreographer Kia S. Smith. Staged on June 10 at Chicago's Auditorium Theatre, the world premiere of *Memoirs of Jazz in the Alley* featured the South Chicago Dance Theatre troupe, audio recordings, sonic collages, video projections, stellar stagecraft and music from a nonet iteration of Collier's band The Chosen Few, who played in the orchestra pit.

This dazzling theatrical work of historical fiction was inspired by an online gallery of photographs chronicling a sociocultural scene fostered in Chicago by Smith's late father, the jazz musician and educator Jimmy Ellis.

Memoirs leans heavily on songs that Smith selected and then recruited Collier to arrange. The tunes included the standards "Bye Bye Blues," "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise" and "It Never Entered My Mind," as well as "Gbogbo Omo Ibile (Going Home)," which appears on expanded reissues of Solomon Ilori's 1963 Blue Note album *African High Life*.

The show's nonlinear narrative — free of spoken dialogue — took the audience on an emotional rollercoaster ride, punctuated by both shocking brutality and buoyant whimsy. Smith seemed to draw from many pop-culture sources, including hip-hop videos and Hollywood musicals.

Collier is keenly aware of the history of interdisciplinary art. During his discussion with DownBeat, he cited the work of bassist Charles Mingus and pianist Cecil Taylor — two jazz giants who combined music and dance — before emphasizing that he wants to create art that speaks to the current day.

"We can't continuously talk about the great times of music and not do anything of greatness in our own time," Collier said. "I'm more interested in this time and place in history. But the fact of the matter is, this is how the flourishing of the Harlem Renaissance became a thing: the conversation between the different artistic mediums. And if we're not having these type of conversations [nowadays], how are we really creating something new?"

Collier plans to have two albums out later this year. One, titled *The Almighty*, will be on the Spiritmuse label. The other, on the Night Dreamer label, has the working title *Parallel Universe*.

Whatever the critics decide to say about those albums, it likely won't affect Collier's drive to keep reaching higher.

"When we got the five-star review for *Cosmic Transitions*, I was really grateful," he said. "But, in my mind, it was like, 'OK, this is just the beginning. This is just one of many highs or lows that are to come. How will we show progress?' That's all I care about. I care about growth. That is my main thing." *—Bobby Reed*

SFJAZZ Names Blanchard Executive Artistic Director

SFJAZZ HAS APPOINTED TERENCE Blanchard as executive artistic director. In the new position, Blanchard will lead the organization's artistic programming and guide its overall creative direction. His appointment comes as SFJAZZ founder Randall Kline prepares to step down from the organization he founded in 1983.

This year, SFJAZZ is celebrating its 40th anniversary and the 10th birthday of the SFJAZZ Center. Blanchard joins SFJAZZ as it prepares for the 2023–'24 season beginning Sept. 7.

Blanchard is a renowned composer, bandleader and trumpet player who has been a consistent artistic force for more than 40 years. From his stint with Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers to writing scores for Spike Lee and other films, he is unique in the jazz world as an artist whose creative endeavors go far beyond the genre into film scoring, crafting television series soundscapes and conceiving grand operas that have been recognized at the highest levels of art appreciation. A recipient of a 2018 USA Artist Fellowship and a 2023 Peabody Medal, Blanchard is also an educational mentor, having held positions at the Berklee Institute of Music, The Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and as chair of jazz studies at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

Blanchard has had a long relationship with SFJAZZ and has performed numerous times at the SFJAZZ Center and for the organization. From 2014 to 2016, he was a SFJAZZ resident artistic director and, in 2016, presented his opera *Champion: An Opera In Jazz*. Most recently, in August 2022, his E-Collective with Turtle Island Quartet performed at the SFJAZZ Center.

As executive artistic director, Blanchard will be the artistic leader of the organization and will help formulate and implement artistic programming across diverse disciplines and genres. He will work closely with the teams at SFJAZZ to curate year-round concert programming, expand the SFJAZZ "At Home" digital platform and further develop community engagement and educational offerings. Blanchard's appointment comes after a national search conducted by Arts Consulting Group.

"I am honored and excited to become a part of such an amazing and historic institution," Blanchard said. "SFJAZZ has meant so much to the development of America's greatest art form. I am looking forward to collaborating with the staff while also bringing my own ideas about how to move our music forward and continue the SFJAZZ mission to explore the full spectrum of jazz — from its origins to its diverse and evolving expressions around the world today. I cannot wait to continue this journey."

SCOTT CHERNIS

Blanchard will help formulate and implement artistic programming across diverse disciplines and genres.

For more information, visit sfjazz.org.

—Ed Enright

ANOUK VAN KALMTHOUT

"I love working with fully developed artists, getting into their world and learning from them," says Ben Wendel.

Ben Wendel's Big Love of Community

FOR MANY MUSICIANS WHO FOUND themselves under a veritable house arrest during the COVID lockdown of 2020–'21, the pandemic became a strange mother and motivator of invention. Deprived of the usual forums of live gigging and musician interactions, artists delved into creative ventures in home studios, through remote tracking and other resourceful workarounds.

One dramatic example of a pandemic-driven jazz project is the new album *All One* from Ben Wendel. The Vancouver-born, Los Angeles-raised saxophonist and reed player boasts a resume includes his genre-stretching band Kneebody and work with Gerald Clayton, Ignacio Berroa, Linda May Han Oh, Prince and Snoop Dog.

For his self-motivated and labor-intensive new album, Wendel created elaborate one-man arrangements, sometimes with this many as 30 multitracked layers of horns. On top of these sonic tapestries, he added his own soloist voice, along with a starry roster of flown-in guests. Each of the six tunes features a special guest, including guitarist Bill Frisell, vocalists Cécile McLorin Salvant and José James, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, flutist Elena Pinderhughes and pianist Tigran Hamasyan.

Out of creative urgency and a sense of artistic mission, the resulting *All One* is a prime case of a highly technology-enabled project that also breathes and feels organic.

And it all started with pandemic deprivation. Wendel points out that "essentially, the pandemic made me realize that I get a lot of emotional and spiritual medicine from playing live, from being creative and from being able to collaborate and commune with other musicians. So when that was taken away, it was really a shock to the system. Working on *All One*, even though it was a lot of remote collaboration, it really was medicine. It was like a lifeline during that time to be able to work toward a goal and do something so ambitious."

Specifically, the impetus to launch what became *All One* was an experimental process after discussing collaborative possibilities with trumpeter Randy Brecker. Wendel offered to work up a modest wind ensemble for Brecker to play over, blending bassoon and saxophone tracks. "It really came together beautifully," he recalls. "That unlocked the door, and I realized, 'Oh, I think there's a concept here that I could really explore more deeply.'"

Asked if he had any role models for the new project, Wendel denied any particular existing paradigms, adding that "this is maybe the first time a project like this has been done. I don't know that any album has had this much layering. Some of these tracks have over 30 voices that are layered (as with the McLorin Salvant-featured 'I Loves You Porgy'). But to me, the real magic trick is that I've been able to play tracks for fellow musicians, and if I don't tell them the technique of how this was put together, they just immediately assumed that it was a live ensemble."

Each of the hand-picked musicians enlisted for the project has special meaning for the leader. Wendel's connection with Pinderhughes, featured in a boldly interactive mode with the leader on the tune "Speak Joy," began when he witnessed her gifts at a CD release party for James Francies. Wendel recalls, "She sat in for one song and basically stole the show — just an absolute phenomenon. We talked afterwards and she said that her and her brother Samora were big fans, that they actually were big fans of *The Seasons* album (Wendel's 2018 release). And I said at the time, 'You know, I would love to work with you at some point.'"

One of the most affecting tunes on the new album is his collaboration with Frisell, to the revamped re-arranged tune of Frisell's thoughtful composition "Throughout." Wendel stressed his admiration for "Bill's whole sound concept, his use of effects pedals, his compositional style, his vulnerability — he is the ultimate genius-level musician. He has that thing, the same thing that I often hear in Wayne Shorter. It's an incredible dichotomy of a childlike approach and sound, yet with so much depth and mastery behind it. Everything from the way I play — from my vibrato to my use of effects pedals to how I compose — is greatly influenced by Bill. And it was such an honor to work with him."

Looking at the project as a whole, almost in suite-like terms, Wendel comments, "I wanted the album to sound unified compositionally and sonically, but also to feel like a journey. It has a beginning, middle and end. For example, the actual chord that the first track ends with is the same chord which ends the final track, I did little things like that from track to track to connect the compositions, to connect the album to give it a subtle kind of construction that you might not even know consciously was happening."

While *All One* is a unique entry in Wendel's discography of six albums under his name, there are detectable precedents to his emphasis on collaboration in his recent past, as on *The Seasons*, with guests including guitarist Julian Lage and saxophonist Joshua Redman. Looking back, Wendel admits that "I have enough of a discography now where I can look back and start to see some patterns that maybe I wasn't even aware of. And it's become really clear to me between *The Seasons*, between my online YouTube series called *Standards with Friends* and then this album that collaboration in general is hugely important to me — a creative springboard. I love working with fully developed artists, getting into their world and learning from them, in every sense of the word. That's a huge part of why I'm a musician, that artist's path of growth through collaboration."

Given Wendel's diversity of musical directions taken over his career, it's obvious that he sees a mission to stretch boundaries. But he is quick to clarify that "I'm not on any crusade, and I'm not consciously trying to be eclectic. I truly am doing my best to just authentically be myself. My feeling about and my love of this music is that it's a celebration of individuality. It encourages you to find your truest self. And at the same time, it also encourages you to work within a community."

—Josef Woodard

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71st ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

HALL OF FAME

Alice Coltrane ENTERS THE HALL OF FAME

By Suzanne Lorge Photo by Frans Schellekens

Alice McLeod Coltrane Turiyasangitananda (1937–2007) spent just four years of her life with tenor saxophonist John Coltrane. These few years proved momentous for them both, however — they toured internationally, turned out several important jazz albums, forged a shared spiritual path and had three children together.

But Alice's work as a musician extended beyond her towering relationship with John, significant as that alliance has been to jazz history. She enters the DownBeat Hall of Fame for her groundbreaking contributions to jazz composition and performance, leaving behind an impressive oeuvre of eclectic works and a hallowed legacy.

Born in 1937, Alice McLeod got her musical start in Detroit, her hometown, by then already one of the most important centers for Black music in the U.S. Following some early classical training, by age 9 she was playing gospel piano and organ in church. This experience prepared her for the jazz clubs that came later, as she followed the lead of her older half-brother, bassist Ernie Farrow — future sideman for bandleaders Terry Gibbs, Yusef Lateef and Stan Getz, among others.

It was in Detroit in the 1950s that Alice likely first heard the inventive music of jazz harpist Dorothy Ashby, five years her senior. Notably, Alice would decide a few years hence (with John's encouragement) to pursue harp as a mode of jazz expression herself.

Alice Coltrane broke down barriers both musical and personal to become a champion of peace and music beyond genre.

She continued her jazz education with a move to Paris, where by 1960 she was gigging as the intermission pianist at the Blue Note and with tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson, with whom she'd worked in Detroit. While in Paris, she had the chance to befriend and learn from trailblazing bebop pianist Bud Powell. And she married for the first time — to singer Kenny (Pancho) Hagood, who had fronted the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra and recorded with Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis. Alice had her first child, Michelle, with Hagood. (John would later adopt Michelle.)

In 1963, newly divorced and back stateside, Alice met John Coltrane one evening in New York at Birdland, where she was part of vibist Terry Gibbs' rhythm section and Coltrane was leading his already-famous quartet. Within three years of this seemingly fated backstage encounter, Alice and he would be a couple with two children: John Jr. and Ravi. They married in 1965, and she soon began playing with his band. In 1966, she took over the piano spot in the quartet from McCoy Tyner when John's longtime pianist decided to leave the ensemble.

Tyner's decision stemmed largely from a growing division between the two players' respective creative views. Throughout the early 1960s, Trane had been moving away from his earlier fascination with bebop and was starting to experiment with free and modal forms and incorporate elements of world music in his compositions. This musical evolution reflected not just John's musical interests but a deepening spiritual quest that he and Alice shared.

As a part of John's rhythm section from 1966 to '67, Alice recorded multiple albums, several of them live, all of them released via the Impulse! label. However, only one of these, *Live At the Village Vanguard Again!*, came out during John's life. These recordings document Alice's increasing skill with free improvisation, playing alongside avant gardists such as saxophonist Pharoah Sanders and drummer Rashied Ali.

The couple's creative time together was short-lived. John died from liver cancer in July 1967, just four months after Alice had given birth to their third son, Oran. Despite the challenges of this loss, within a year she had succeeded in releasing her first solo record, *A Monastic Trio*, on Impulse! This record marked the debut of the Alice Coltrane Quartet, with Sanders on woodwinds, Jimmy Garrison on bass and Ben Riley on drums. Recorded at the Coltrane home on Long Island, in January 1968, the album established Alice's authority as a bandleader and composer. It also marks her recording debut on the harp, which would soon become one of her principal instruments.

Her musical output expanded rapidly in the years following John's passing.

In 1968 Alice also self-released *Cosmic Music*, which Impulse! picked up soon after. The album captures the first studio session between the newlyweds, recorded in early 1966 during a tour with John's quartet. Her musical output expanded rapidly in the years following his passing. As a composer and bandleader, she released 12 studio albums over the next decade. As these recordings show, more and more frequently Alice was playing harp and Eastern musical instruments, and she had started to add strings to her own works.

These musical changes were the outward manifestation of a personal shift that had been in process at least since Alice's first days with John, when they had begun to embrace Eastern spiritual ideas. Further to this pursuit, in 1970, Alice became a follower of Indian guru Swami Satchidananda, and later with Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

In 1972 she moved to Southern California, where in 1975 she founded the Vedantic Center, north of Los Angeles. In acknowledgement of her new metaphysical devotion, Alice changed her name to Turiyasangitananda, or the "Transcendental Lord's Highest Song of Bliss." By 1978, Turiya, as she became known, was fully immersed in ashram life as a spiritual leader, and Alice Coltrane had largely left the jazz world behind.

That same year, Warner Bros. released *Transfiguration*, the recording of a live concert at UCLA's Schoenberg Hall in Los Angeles that spring. Alice had played organ and piano on the gig — forgoing the harp (not surprising, given the heft of the instrument) — alongside bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Roy Haynes. Later, in the studio, she had overdubbed strings onto some of the cuts, enhancing their meditative effect. She would not record a commercial album for another 26 years.

Alice, now Turiya, did continue to write and record music during her quieter life at the ashram, however, distributing her new music to devotees informally on cassettes under the ashram's Avatar label. These worshipful compositions reveal her turn toward simpler melodic and chordal structures — gone were the elastic, furious bebop riffs and free-ranging extrapolations. The first known record under these auspices came with 1982's *Turiya Sings*; this recording also chronicles her first steps into vocal music, as she sings in Sanskrit and accompanies herself on Wurlitzer organ.

In the late 1970s, Turiya also became an author, publishing several books through the Avatar imprint: *Monument Eternal*, an autobiographic telling of her spiritual journey; *Endless Wisdom*, a volume of more than 100 of her inspired verses; *Divine Revelations*, a compilation of sacred experiences associated with Satya Sai Baba; and *Turiya Speaks*, a collection of her spiritual teachings.

In 2004, at the behest of sons Ravi and Oran, Turiya returned to the studio for what would be her final commercial jazz release, *Translinear Light*, again on Impulse!. On this, she played piano and keyboards with an intergenerational ensemble: bassist Haden and drummer Jack DeJohnette, both longstanding collaborators; Ravi and Oran, on tenor and alto, respectively; and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts and bassist James Genus, on a first-time studio date with the legendary composer. With these musicians she crafted a concise retrospective of her musical life: two gospel hymns, two devotional chants, two of John's tunes and six of her originals. She released the album under the name Alice Coltrane.

When Turiya "left her physical form," as her website says, in January 2007, she ceded her legacy — and John's — to her surviving children Michelle, Ravi and Oran, each a successful musician in their own right. (John Jr. died in a car accident in 1982). This legacy includes an interest in maintaining The John & Alice Coltrane Home, the Long Island house where John wrote *A Love Supreme* and Alice recorded six of her leader albums. Noting its significance to Black culture, in 2018 the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded the Home its National Treasure designation. The Home's mission, stated simply, is "to be a force for good" — John's words and Alice's prayer for humanity. **DB**

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71st ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

"He was always impervious to musical fashion and true to his musical vision," says Don Was, president of Blue Note Records, about Charles Lloyd.

Charles Lloyd FINDS FREEDOM & WONDER

By Phillip Lutz Photo by Dorothy Darr

If, as Charles Lloyd likes to say, "creativity is going to burst at its seams," then it's no surprise that the irrepressibly creative artist breaches the two-dimensional confines of a video-conference screen and emerges as a multidimensional figure.

Lloyd — saxophonist, seeker and self-described late-blooming flower — appears imbued with the serenity of a yogi, the sensitivity of an empath and the constitution of a swimmer just back from a dip in the pool outside his home in the California hills.

That he is 85 and the oldest-ever DownBeat Critics Poll Artist of the Year, as he is this year, is almost beside the point. Lloyd seems to have transcended chronology; to hear a Lloydian musical phrase unfold is to receive the wisdom of several lifetimes in a single breath — suspending, if not upending, one's perception of reality as a linear proposition.

"There is no 'time,'" he said, soaking in the negative air ions generated by the ultraviolet rays streaming through the skylight in his bedroom. "There is only 'now.'"

Early on, Lloyd built enough bridges for several lifetimes — across a racial divide as a young man of color playing with white musicians in his native Memphis; across a genre divide as both a counterculture fixture on Fillmore's rock stage and DownBeat readers' 1967 Jazz Artist of the Year; across a commercial threshold, selling a million units of an album, *Forest Flower*, back in the day.

And, he said, he had no intention of "leaving town" before his work was through. "At this point in my life I'm still looking for the note. But I'm a little nearer."

Lloyd was just back from a late-May concert in Healdsburg, California, where he played to adoring crowds in a duo with pianist Gerald Clayton. By the time this year's touring ends, he will have played at least 13 more concerts in venues spanning North America and Europe.

Last year, he played at least 22 concerts worldwide. Most everywhere, he was greeted like a conquering hero by a mix of groups. At New York's Sony Hall, the overflow crowd ranged from Gen-Z'ers just learning about him to Baby Boomers who regard him like an old friend. The concert presented Lloyd in trio and quintet formats. Playlists and group dynamics diverged. But both groups offered generous quantities of a quality that guitarist Bill Frisell, who played in both, dubbed "the Charles thing."

"It's his voice, or his way of coming at something," Frisell said. "There's a sensitivity. He's putting himself out there in danger a little bit, like exposed nerves. There's a thing where you're not quite sure where things are going to go that allows for extraordinary things to happen."

On that June night, micro-events morphed into extraordinary things. During the quintet set, for example, Frisell, unfamiliar with a tune Lloyd called, ventured a contravening series of ideas so logical that they threatened to alter the flow of play until Lloyd, who had laid out, reentered the fray and, with a small gesture, brought it home. Similarly subtle assertions of authority over the course of the evening built to a kind of crescendo. At show's end, the audience, hardly calmed by Lloyd's recitation of excerpts from the *Bhagavad Gita*, rushed the stage.

The process, in one form or another, repeated itself on stages from Canada to Poland. Yet, for Lloyd, the most personally satisfying moments on the tour might have been offstage at the Memphis stop — a "great homecoming," he said, courtesy of Manassas High School classmates and a contingent of aspiring saxophonists whose presence recalled memories of youthful days coming up among a rich crop of Memphis musicians: Phineas Newborn, Frank Strozier, Harold Mabern, George Coleman and his dear friend Booker Little. "In Memphis we had freedom and wonder," he said, glancing at the collection of photos he called his jazz shrine. "That game they were playing out there was not going to taint us."

Lloyd's lifelong refusal to play the game is a major reason he has, despite his share of ups and downs, emerged at the top of his field, enjoying the adoration of the masses and a late-in-life recording contract with Blue Note that allows him near-total freedom, according to Don Was, the label's president. "He was always impervious to musical fashion and true to his musical vision," Was said, "and it's kept him vibrant."

The label followed Lloyd out on a numerological limb last year with its Trio of Trios series of recordings, three sets of threesomes released at approximately three-month intervals. Meanwhile, Was said, that achievement is just prologue to Lloyd's next release, "the best record of his life." The album, a studio session recorded in the run-up to Lloyd's 85th birthday celebration at Santa Barbara's Lobero Theater in March, will be out next year, and it will feature pianist Jason Moran, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Brian Blade.

Lloyd is enthusiastic about the release; likewise, his present tour, which will take him from Newport to Berlin, Germany, with an October stop for two dates at Jazz at Lincoln Center. One will feature the long-awaited return of Sangam, the trio with percussionist Zakir Hussain and drummer Eric Harland formed in tribute to Billy Higgins. Lloyd's association with the drummer, he said, stretched from jams at Ornette Coleman's Los Angeles home in the 1950s to a duo recording made in January 2001, four months before Higgins "left town."

That recollection is yet another in Lloyd's memory bank, a repository in which, despite its seemingly limitless capacity, he ultimately refuses to dwell. For all his memories, Lloyd remains a man of the moment. **DB**

Mary Halvorson's COMPLEX DREAMS

By Dan Ouellette Photo by Michael Wilson

In 2017, Mary Halvorson unpredictably garnered the top guitarist award in DownBeat's Critics Poll, outpacing perennial six-string victors such as Bill Frisell, Pat Metheny and John Scofield.

"It's insane," Halvorson said over espresso at Kos Kaffe Roasting House in Brooklyn soon after her first guitar award was announced.

"I don't feel like I'm the best guitarist, but it is an honor," she said. "When I became a musician and started playing the kind of music that I do, I had very low expectations for getting any kind of people listening to it and enjoying it. I went into this thinking, I believe in this, and I really enjoy doing it, so I'm going to keep working on it. I did not do it with hopes for success. But when things like this happen, it blows my mind. I appreciate it. For me, it's a chance for having my music be heard more than I would have hoped for."

Fast-forward seven years and Halvorson has once again scored the No. 1 guitarist trophy in the 2023 DownBeat Critics Poll — her seventh year in a row.

But the biggest story is Halvorson recording DownBeat's Album of the Year — the superb two-LP suite *Amaryllis & Belladonna*, which that features her steady sextet on one recording and a string quartet on the other. As she firmly says, she's never liked being placed in a box. And this double header demonstrates that.

Massachusetts-born and Brooklyn-based, Halvorson has evolved into an unorthodox guitarist who has been heralded as the next important singular six-stringer with a new voice. She delivers a strong string attack, a very dry sound, an open crunch with shape experiments, a luscious lyricism and a keen attention to the acoustic element of the guitar even though she's amplified and using octave pedal effects.

After Halvorson's first award, jazz aficionados were curious enough to give a close listen to her own bands, her collective collaboration in Thumbscrew with bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara, and even her supporting improvisational role in Marc Ribot's The Young Philadelphians project.

Two years after her first DownBeat poll award, Halvorson was awarded the prestigious 2019 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, often called the Genius Grant. Not bad for an artist whose music challenges and fascinates all the same time. It's not your typical mainstream jazz but a more reconstructed transformation of the genre that deserves rapt attention. For the past decade, Halvorson has been captivating listeners with a series of projects of unconventional beauty and breathtaking magic.

Boutique label Nonesuch took notice and offered Halvorson free rein to follow her creative desires. What results is the first masterwork of her career that she describes as a musical adventure that is "modular and interlocking, existing separately then coming together."

Is *Amaryllis & Belladonna* jazz?

"Whenever people ask me that question, I say that I don't know," says Halvorson. "I'm not too attached to the label, but I'm certainly influenced by jazz. With the strings, it may not seem so much jazz, but I'm improvising on guitar throughout."

In talking about the complexity of her music in the two suites, Halvorson says, "I've never been into composing complex music for the sake of complexity. Some of it may be complex and difficult to execute, but that's what I'm hearing. I don't shy away from writing something simple. I go out and dig deeper. I get excit-

ed when I go left of center."

Her unique architectural forms for this project were created during the pandemic shutdown, and in many ways reflected the open-ended opportunity to design a new language of jazz. *Amaryllis* features Halvorson's new sextet — an improvisatory big-sound combo of old and new friends comprising trumpeter Adam O'Farrill, trombonist Jacob Garchik, vibraphonist Patricia Brennan, bassist Nick Dunston and drummer Fujiwara — as well as three pieces composed for collaboration with the Mivos Quartet.

Halvorson turns the focus fully onto the string quartet on the other album suite, *Belladonna*. In both recordings, she delivers bent chords that sound out of tune, dissonant lyricism, perplexing guitar lines, angular six-string velocity and delicate percussive plucks — in refracted urgency and surprise. She engages in compelling guitar conversations with her teammates.

The sextet proved to be the key to Halvorson's soundscape. "It doesn't always feel like a fit when you put together a band," she says. "But when we rehearsed, it felt right from the first note. We did two gigs at Roulette and then went into the studio."

Halvorson opens *Amaryllis* with the kaleidoscopic "Night Shift," a palette of shining colors. The title tune gets rowdy and riveting, all with Halvorson's skipping lead. The finale, "Teeth" offers a sonic surprise where Halvorson shifts gears at the ending, with a flurry of octave pedal effects that come in from deep left field. "At that point, the piece was calling for something different," she says with a smile.

"It's fun to put different people together to play my music," Halvorson says. "They all take it seriously. They learn the music. They are people I like to hang out with, and we all enjoy working on the music, which matters a lot to me."

The classically trained Brennan says that while she's a percussionist at heart, she sees the sonic possibilities of the vibes and began playing in New York's improv-rich scene. "Mary's compositional style and approach resonates with me," she says. "This is where I'm going."

On *Belladonna*, Halvorson goes full-dive into playing only with the string quartet. Classically trained as a violinist before the guitar wooed her, she returned to an avant-classical setting, envisioning what a string quartet would sound like in the context of her music.

It was monumental challenge. Certainly, Halvorson had the time to research and then set out to learn how to write for strings. It had to be in the zone of "not doing something in a half-assed way."

Her teacher? Experimental violinist Jessica Pavone, who is one of her closest friends and frequent duo collaborator for 20 years.

"Jessica was so helpful to make what I was writing clear and cohesive and not awkward," says Halvorson. "She made sense about the bowings and the articulations of strings."

It makes for a completely different suite of music. The pensive, then exciting "Nodding Yellow" features Halvorson and the quartet intersecting, "Flying Song" features more guitar-strings conversations and the title tune arrives with a winsome feel.

All told, Halvorson's music expects the unexpected with a sting (*Amaryllis*, for example, is the name of a beautiful South African plant that is also deadly poisonous) but also an eye-winking sense of humor. "I would agree that I'm playful," she says. "But some of it leans to darkness. So, the playfulness balances that out."

Halvorson has already recorded a new album for her sextet, now officially called Amaryllis. She took the new music for a European tour in March, then headed home to the studio to record tracks slated for release early next year. In addition, Halvorson has been busy with Thumbscrew's current artist residency in Pittsburgh. She'll be doing a duo project with pianist Sylvie Courvoisier and touring with cellist Tomeka Reid's quartet. And, finally, she's introducing the new improvisation collective Illegal Crowns with cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum, pianist Benoit Delbecq and Fujiwara. **DB**

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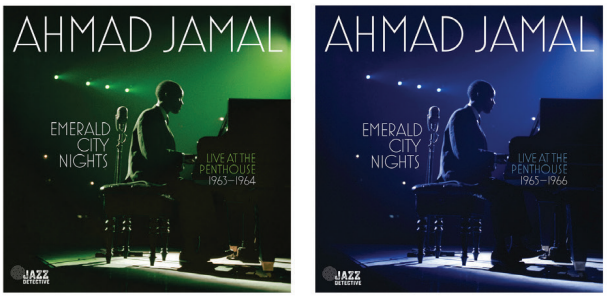
HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR



AHMAD JAMAL - *EMERALD CITY NIGHTS*
Live at the Penthouse (1963-1966)

PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

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Ahmad Jamal

EMERALD CITY NIGHTS

By J.D. Considine Photo by Jean-Marc Lubrano

When Ahmad Jamal was first approached about releasing some of the recordings made during his many appearances at Seattle's The Penthouse in the 1960s, he was initially skeptical about having to go back and consider such old recordings.

"Fifty-nine years?" he remembered thinking. "Come on." But after further consideration, he changed his mind. "You know, there's no such thing as old music," he said, in an interview with DownBeat last November. "It's either good or bad. So I hope this is a good thing for everyone concerned."

He needn't have worried. In addition to earning dozens of rave reviews, *Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse 1963–64* was voted the top Historical Jazz Album in the 71st Annual DownBeat Critics Poll. Sadly, Jamal was not around to see this triumph, as he passed away on April 16 at his home in Ashley Falls, Massachusetts.

"It's very fitting," said Zev Feldman, who produced the album for his Jazz Detective label. "That whole period [of Jamal's career] was such magic. I believed in these tapes from the moment we discovered them. And to have him, who was notorious for not wanting to revisit his past, take a listen and talk about [this music] — I think that says something about where he was in his life."

Jamal made numerous stops at the Seattle jazz landmark over the years, and was friendly with the club's owner, Charlie Puzzo. There would always be a Steinway grand piano set up for him — Jamal was a lifelong Steinway artist — and a packed house waiting. But until Feldman approached him, he had no idea that there were reels and reels of his performances on tape out in Seattle. (Last year's top Historical album, *John Coltrane's A Love Supreme: Live in Seattle* was also recorded at the Penthouse.)

Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse 1963–64 was the first of three releases compiled from those recordings. A second volume,

covering the years 1965–'66, was released in December 2022; a third and final volume, covering 1966–'68, will be released in the late fall. The Penthouse closed in 1968.

Across those years, Jamal worked with several different lineups. Apart from four tracks recorded in June 1963, where Richard Evans played bass, Jamil Nasser was always Jamal's bassist. But there were three different drummers over the years: Chuck Lampkin (who played with both Evans and Nasser), Vernel Fournier and Frank Gant.

"Jamil Nasser was one of the most celebrated bassists of all time," Jamal said last November. "He brought Phineas Newborn to New York. Worked with B.B. King. I think he did three hundred and some one-nighters in one year with B.B. King. One of the masters from Memphis." Evans, in addition to playing bass, wrote the first volume's second tune, "Minor Adjustment."

"He was one of my favorite writers," Jamal said. "And he was Hiromi's teacher when she was at Berklee."

But as time passed, so did Jamal's bandmates. "Frank Gant, he died recently," he noted. "Chuck Lampkin has been gone awhile. And Vernel Fournier, one of the great, great masters from New Orleans. I'm the only one left."

And now, Jamal is gone, too.

Still, thanks to the *Emerald City Nights* releases, Jamal's legacy is stronger than ever. Although there have always been those who recognized the greatness and singularity of his approach both to the piano and to improvisation — Stanley Crouch opined that Jamal was second only to Charlie Parker "in the development of fresh form in jazz" — a number of prominent jazz critics were dismissive of his music, among them Ira Gitler, who dismissed Jamal's playing as "cocktail music."

Feldman, who interviewed Gitler for the 2014 release *Swingin' On The Korner: Live At The Keystone Korner* by the Red Garland Trio, feels that the "cocktail" quip wasn't intended to be as dismissive as it sounds. "I think maybe he was talking about music being accessible, about playing also for the people," he said. "Like Erroll Garner wasn't [a cocktail pianist], either. But he always played for people, was there with the melody. There was something accessible about it. It was the opposite of self-indulgence."

Jamal likewise made a point of carefully framing the melody with his arrangements, and was more inclined to leave space in his phrases than fill every bar with a flurry of notes. Despite the changes in personnel across the years, his trio approach remained strikingly consistent. There was a strong sense of form to his arrangements, with melodic lines built in to bolster the improvisation, the way a big band chart might. Above all, there was the groove, a deep sense of rhythm drive so vital that his work spoke to hip-hop musicians who weren't even born when the original recordings were made.

"That heavy groove," agreed Feldman. He cites the version of "Tangerine" on this first volume as being something that he keeps going back to, swept in by its rhythmic vitality. "There are tracks that just take you over, like you can't help it."

The series' final volume, drawn from four different shows and featuring Nasser and Gant, promises more of the same, including a virtuosically adventurous take on "Autumn Leaves" and a spectacularly funky treatment of Garner's classic "Misty."

"That was just such a golden period. There was so much magic," Feldman said. "He was still expanding as an artist, discovering, and pushing the envelope, whether it was his sense of time or the way he used space in the music.

"I'm just really happy that we're all talking about him," he added. "We were lucky that he was here to experience it, to feel the love of all the critical acclaim that came on. I'm just grateful for the experience." **DB**

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71st ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

HALL OF FAME VETERANS COMMITTEE

Mario Bauzá

GODFATHER OF AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ

By Ted Panken Photo by Jack Vartoogian

"Living and playing with Mario, I found out that despite the language differences, Afro-Americans and Cubans were not destined to be total strangers, musically. In fact, they could sleep in the same bed, at least in the same room."* —Dizzy Gillespie, *To Be Or Not To Bop

Mario Bauzá (1911–'93) spent much of his distinguished seven-decade career behind the scenes.

Standard jazz histories commonly cite Havana-born Bauzá — recently inducted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame via the Veterans Committee — for mentoring Dizzy Gillespie in the nuts-and-bolts of Afro-Cuban polyrhythms at the end of the 1930s, when both played trumpet (and roomed together) with the Cab Calloway Orchestra. Their connection famously prepared Gillespie for future explorations in blending jazz with Cuban and other Afro-descended, pan-American flavors, and for introducing Gillespie to master conguero Chano Pozo, who fueled the pathbreaking 1947–'48 big band recordings of "Manteca," "Algo Bueno" and "Cubana Be, Cubana Bop."

By this time, as Gillespie often acknowledged, Bauzá was already combining jazz arranging techniques and unadulterated Afro-Cuban rhythms with Machito and the Afro-Cubans, a racially integrated orchestra fronted by his brother-in-law, vocalist and maraca player Frank "Machito" Grillo. "The band not only modernized Afro-Cuban music, but its name was a wakeup call to the jazz and Latino communities to deal with the West African roots of the complex rhythmic structures — played by conga drum, bongos and timbales — of mambo, cha cha cha, son montuno or guaguanco," said Bobby Sanabria, who played drumset in Bauzá's orchestra between 1983 and 1993. He notes that Bauzá's "Tanga," recorded by the Afro-Cubans in 1943, is the first true Latin jazz hybrid — "the forebear of what was later known as modal harmony, soloing or vamping on one or two chords, which is common in Afro-Caribbean music."

"[Composer] Chico O'Farrill said it was what he'd always dreamed of: a band with the harmonic sophistication of jazz but also the rhythmic sophistication of his Cuban ancestry,"

Sanabria continued. "Without the Machito Orchestra, you don't have Tito Puente or Tito Rodriguez. You don't have Arturo O'Farrill's band. All of us followed them."

Himself of African descent, Bauzá was raised by his wealthy white Spanish godparents, who started him with solfege at age 4 and gave him a clarinet when he was 7. He studied at Havana Conservatory of Music for the next eight years, declined a scholarship to La Scala in Italy, and instead became one of three clarinetists in the Havana Symphony Orchestra, while concurrently performing in several dance bands. One was led by pianist Antonio Maria Romeu, who brought him to New York in 1927 for a recording date. Already familiar with American jazz via Cuban radio, Bauzá spent his 11-day sojourn frequenting Harlem's various boîtes, dance halls and variety theaters at night, while spending afternoons hearing midtown performances by Paul Whiteman's Orchestra, where he admired C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer's feature on "Rhapsody In Blue."

"I fell in love with jazz then," Bauzá told DownBeat in a 1993 cover story. "I couldn't stay because I was too young to get a passport." He returned to Havana, learned the alto saxophone, left the symphony and returned to New York in April 1930 with Orquesta Don Azpiazú, which had recorded "The Peanut Vendor" with Antonio Machin singing and El Chino Lara on trumpet.

Ensconced in Harlem, Bauzá learned English, assiduously networked and gradually established himself as a multiple woodwindist on jobs with, among others, ragtime giant Luckey Roberts and Noble Sissle's orchestra with Sidney Bechet. In summer 1931, Machin needed a trumpet player to play in the Cuban style on an impending record. Bauzá said, "If you buy me a trumpet, I'll play." He was true to his word.

"I fell in love with the trumpet," Bauzá told DownBeat. "I wanted to be like Louis Armstrong; I knew all his solos." Two years later, he joined Chick Webb, who told him, "You already have everything you need to play lead trumpet for me … but you pronounce your phrases like a Cuban. I'm going to teach you to pronounce your phrases like an American Negro." As Bauzá said, "That enabled me to analyze the differences in language between Cuban music and jazz." The effectiveness of Webb's ministrations is evident on the anthemic 1934 recording "Stompin' At The Savoy," where Bauzá plays the opening muted trumpet solo and, subsequently, a swinging clarinet improvisation. In 1935, Bauzá, now fully bilingual, allegedly brought Ella Fitzgerald to Webb's attention; in 1936, Webb appointed him the band's musical director.

Bauzá invited Machito to move to New York in 1937, the year he befriended Gillespie, who impressed him as "the greatest thing I had ever heard." Bauzá left Chick Webb in 1938, and joined Cab Calloway, whom he persuaded to hire Gillespie. Feeling creatively thwarted, he left in 1940, the year he and Grillo launched Machito and the Afro-Cubans, which he served as music director — introducing several dance crazes, impacting the sounds of jazz and rock 'n' roll — until 1976.

A well-received 1979 Lincoln Center tribute concert returned Bauzá to public view. He formed his own band (propelled by Sanabria's drumming), which played frequently throughout the 1980s and was documented on *Legendary Mambo King*, *My Time Is Now* and *944 Columbus*, all on Messidor, between 1991 and 1993.

Bauzá wasn't one to look back. Henry Threadgill, who played second alto saxophone and flute in the big band during the latter '80s, writes in his new memoir: "Bauzá would get impatient with the more conventional players. He'd say, 'I've heard that. Charlie Parker did it all decades ago. Don't bring that up here.'"

The Mambo King cosigned that sentiment in the aforementioned DownBeat article, published shortly before his death: "Don't copy the ones who already made it. Those people got there by creating. Everybody wants to be Coltrane; but Coltrane was a creator. Dizzy was Dizzy, and he made it. Try to be yourself. That's what I tell all the young generation. That's good advice." DB

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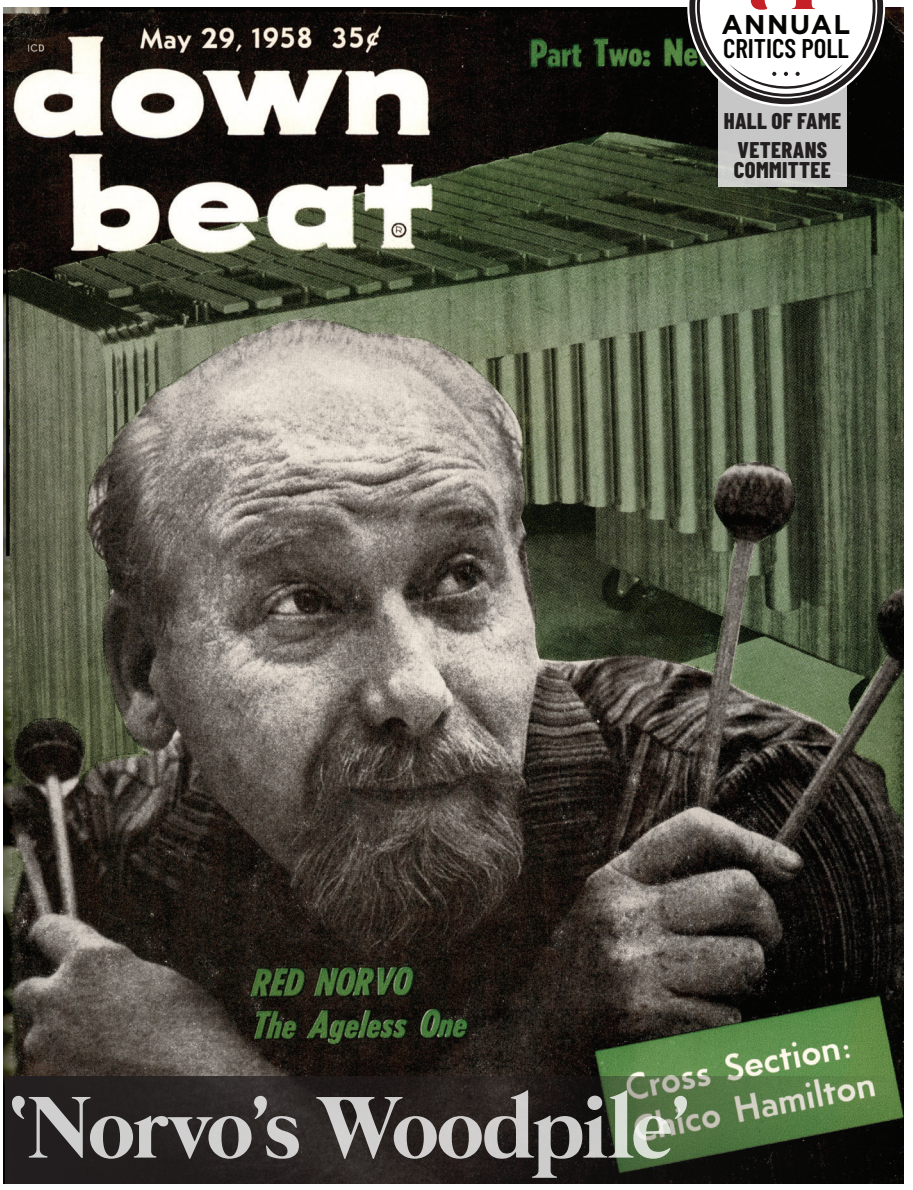


BUILDS A VIBRAPHONE EMPIRE

By John McDonough

This year the DownBeat Hall of Fame catches up with the manifold lives of Red Norvo (1908–'99), one of the small handful of musicians in jazz history who not only brought a new style and intelligence to the music but founded a whole new class of instruments as well.

The mallet family — xylophone, marimba and ultimately vibraphone — was a clownish novelty of early 20th century vaudeville, where Norvo got his start in the '20s, tap dancing and playing "Poet And Peasant." Its epicene delicacy had no place in hot jazz when he joined Paul Whiteman in the early '30s.

DON BRONSTEIN

Red Norvo was that rare musician who was not really a product in any particular pop style or period, writes critic John McDonough.

But Norvo saw possibilities others had overlooked. In 1932, while Lionel Hampton was still juggling drum sticks, Norvo's xylophone accompanied Mildred Bailey (whom he married in 1930) on her first hit recording of "Rockin' Chair." A year later he recorded intimate chamber performances of Bix Beiderbecke's "In A Mist" and his own "Dance Of The Octopus" on marimba. The jazz world had never met such an emotionally veiled sound. Gunther Schuller would call them "clearly the most advanced composition[s] of the early '30s." Three years later Hampton would join the Benny Goodman Quartet and the vibraphone would find its killer-diller niche. But even today, those pioneering Norvo pieces have a semi-atonal avant quality that looks beyond swing to a more cerebral post-war jazz future. They opened jazz's ear to wider temperatures.

Such experimentation was not fashionable, however, on 52nd Street, where Norvo arrived in 1934–'35. DownBeat admired his virtuosity but was slow to see a future for the marimba, brushing it off as "Norvo's woodpile" in early headlines. But he caught the ear of producer John Hammond, who recorded him often with Bailey and ambitious contemporaries like Goodman, Artie Shaw, Bunny Berigan and Chu Berry. By the time swing swallowed up the country in early 1936, Norvo and Bailey each had made prominent reputations for themselves individually, which led agent Willard Alexander to see them as a unique two-for-one touring band called "Mr. and Mrs. Swing."

The Norvo orchestra opened in New York in May and was unique from the start. "The real thrill … is its complete ease," DownBeat's George Frazier noted in the June 1936 edition. "The whole band is in perfect taste. It may be because of Red's personality or something else again. But these guys have never played better."

The something else Frazier was looking for

was Eddie Sauter, a brilliant 21-year-old Norvo discovery fresh out of Juilliard who became the band's chief designer and architect. Sauter built daring but gentle harmonic textures that cradled Norvo's solos in a soft, swinging and wistful warmth that concealed their many surprises. "Our idea for the ensemble was rather unique," Norvo told this writer in 1979. "Most bands would write a lead line for a section and fill in other parts harmonically. Eddie was after a more linear style, to write a line for each instrument that could make sense on its own as a well as harmonically." (For a sense of the Norvo-Sauter sound, try YouTubing "Remember," "Russian Lullaby" or Sauter's abstract accompaniment to Bailey's playing on "Smoke Dreams.") The band won high praise from critics, but modest numbers in the DownBeat polls. "We were profitable though," Norvo said. "You didn't have to be in the top 10 lists to make good money."

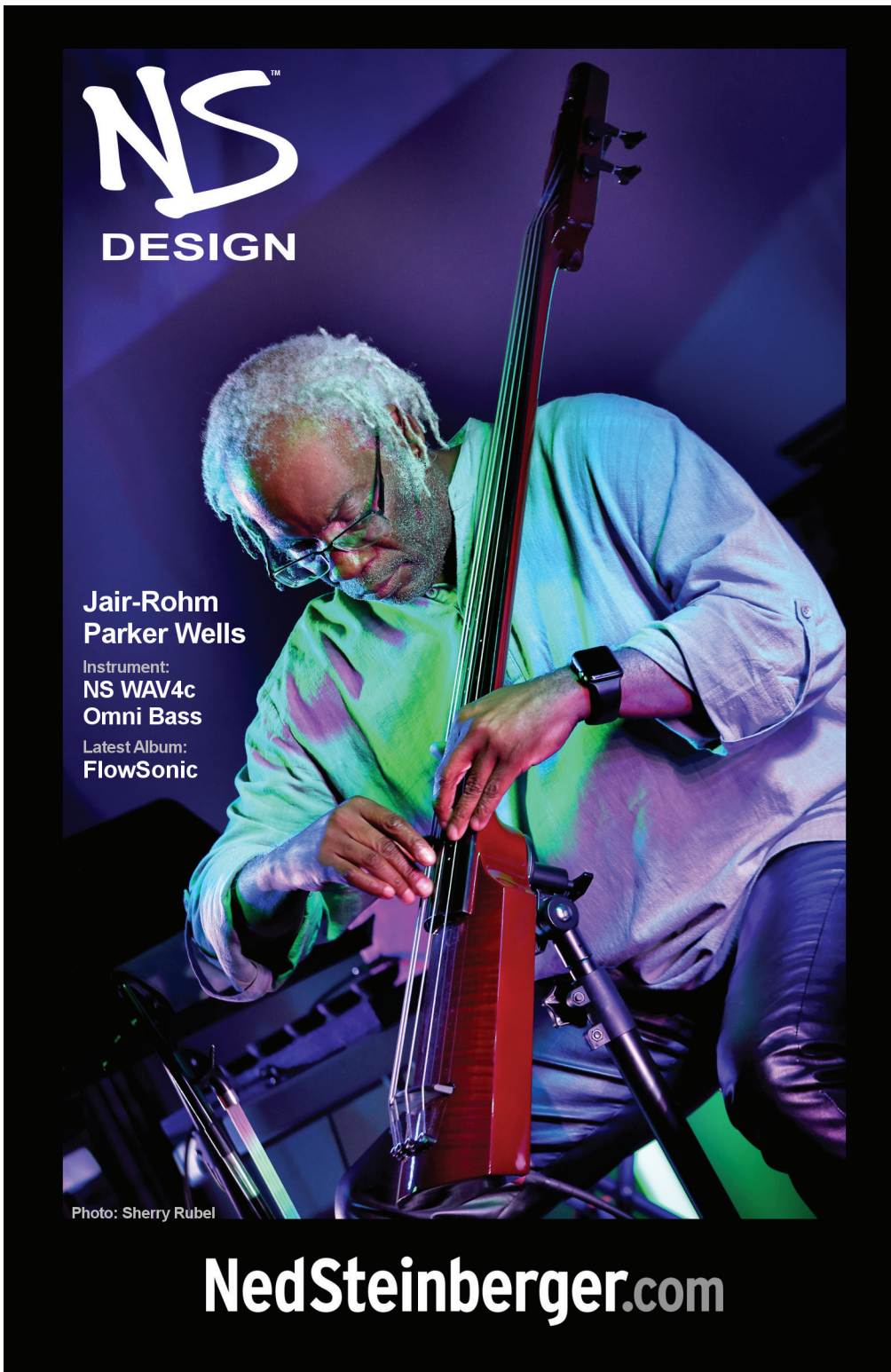
After a business dispute in 1939, Norvo returned to the easy small-group life of 52nd Street, where he mentored the early careers of Shorty Rogers, Flip Phillips, Ralph Burns and others, all of whom would become part of the Woody Herman First Herd during its last year with Decca. By the end of 1945, the group was packed with eager young modernists. In three years, the band had shot from 14th to 1st place in the DownBeat Readers Poll. Norvo, meanwhile, had switched from xylophone to vibraphone. He sat in on Herman's "Father's Mustache" session in September, felt surprisingly at home, and joined as soloist and co-leader in January, just in time for the band's spectacular Carnegie Hall debut in March. Norvo was now in the forefront of the rush into postwar modernism.

But Norvo's credentials were already certified. In June 1944 Comet Records had offered him an open-ended session and unique opportunity. "I had a free hand," he said in 1979, "so I gambled. Bird and Diz were dirty words for my generation, probably because they were saying new things." Not without a few new ideas himself, however, Norvo was intrigued and brought them together with swing stars Teddy Wilson and Slam Stewart. In helping to make a place for the vibes in the new music, Norvo caught a crackling, intergenerational rapport in his famous "Get Happy"/"Congo Blues" session — in Gunther Schuller's words, "playing with a rhythmic freedom that anticipates the ornamental style and subtle swing of Milt Jackson."

The most surprising of Norvo's later working groups was the trio he formed in Los Angeles with guitarist Tal Farlow in 1950. When their bassist summarily departed, Jimmy Rowles suggested Charles Mingus, who was then between gigs and delivering mail, according to Farlow. Their rapport was immediate, intimate and groundbreaking, yet popular enough to build steady work and a nice discography. Mingus and Farlow found their natural voices in a classic Norvo format that attained a compact equilibrium between commerce and art by coaxing fresh surprises from familiar melodies. Mingus and Norvo delivered a "Prelude To A Kiss" unique among its hundreds of versions.

From the '50s forward, Norvo lived in Santa Monica, where he settled into the West Coast jazz community and continued to record into the 1980s. The Norvo Sextet toured Australia in 1959 with Frank Sinatra, resulting in the only album the singer would ever make with a small jazz combo, *Frank Sinatra With The Red Norvo Quintet Live In Australia, 1959*, released on Blue Note in 1997.

Over a 60-year career that spanned Whiteman to Mingus, Red Norvo was that rare musician who was not really a product in any particular pop style or period. Welcome in virtually any jazz ensemble, he was a fluent and transcendent product of his own virtuosity, intelligence and integrity. And an essential addition to the DownBeat Hall of Fame. **DB**



71st ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

ALTO SAXOPHONIST OF THE YEAR
RISING STAR JAZZ GROUP OF THE YEAR
RISING STAR COMPOSER OF THE YEAR

Immanuel Wilkins — A CRITICS POLL TRIFECTA

By Bill Milkowski Photo by RI Sutherland-Cohen

It was clear from the opening track of Immanuel Wilkins' stunning sophomore outing for Blue Note, *The 7th Hand*, that listeners were instantly thrust into some unusually deep waters.

The striking album cover alone — a depiction of the Philadelphia-born, Brooklyn-based alto saxophonist, composer, arranger and bandleader being baptized in a lake in what appeared to be a part-Sun Ra/part-Santeria ceremony — suggested as much.

But what was contained inside that enigmatic packaging was indeed special enough to win Wilkins a Critics Poll trifecta: Alto Saxophonist of the Year, Rising Star Group of the Year and Rising Star Composer of the Year.

The album's opener — a surging "Emanation," underscored by Kweku Sumbry's dynamic pulse on the kit, fueled by Darryl John's insistent walking bass lines and pianist Micah Thomas' propulsive comping, all highlighted by the leader's buoyant, Bird-like momentum on alto — sets an exhilarating tone for the album.

But perhaps more captivating is track two, "Don't Break," which opens with Wilkins' gorgeous alto tones woven soulfully into the fabric of a gospel-flavored piece that soon melds with a mesmerizing 12/8 West African drum choir, courtesy of Farafina Kan, indelibly connecting gospel and jazz to Africa through its rhythmic roots.

"Fugitive Ritual, Selah" is an unhurried, hymn-like meditation on sacred Black spaces intended to soothe and elevate, while the darker, more enigmatic "Shadow" is cast in a vein of Wayne Shorter's hauntingly beautiful "Fall."

The tender, harmonically shifting "Witness," featuring Elena Pinderhughes' soaring flute, is the lyrical high point of the album, while "Lighthouse" again showcases Wilkins in all-out burn mode, unleashing an explosive stream of notes over a percolating undercurrent that culminates in an incredibly dynamic drum solo from Sumbry.

The 7th Hand concludes with a compelling 26-minute free improvisation that explores the spiritual, speaking-in-tongues energy of the Pentecostal church and the sheer catharsis of latter-day John Coltrane, taking listeners on a long and heady ride. As Wilkins told DownBeat in a March 2022 interview: "My work is the intersection between spiritual practice and Black aesthetics. The two symbols I draw from are John Coltrane and the Black church."

Again, deep waters.

Of course, the signs for Wilkins' rise were already firmly in place from his previous conceptual outing, *Omega* (Blue Note), a suite of adventurous originals that spoke directly to the Black experience across seven movements, from the 1918 lynching of Mary Turner in Georgia to the 2014 killing of Michael Brown Jr. by police in Ferguson, Missouri, to a tranquil reflection on influential Black activist and author Weldon Johnson.

And while Wilkins' debut was named the No. 1 Jazz Album of 2020 by The New York Times, the 26-year-old's eagerly awaited followup album is a cut above. Referencing free-jazz, Biblical vesselhood and perfor-

mance art in its seven-track suite, *The 7th Hand* offers a startling, fully realized statement by a true Rising Star on the scene.

Since moving to New York in 2015 to attend Juilliard, Wilkins has earned a sterling reputation as a versatile sideman working for artists like Jason Moran, Wynton Marsalis, Aaron Parks, Michael Dease, Ben Wolfe, Gretchen Parlato, Orrin Evans, James Francies and Joel Ross, to name a few. Starting out on violin at age 3, he moved to alto saxophone at 8, later earning a spot in his school band.

"When I started playing the saxophone, community came with it," he told DownBeat. "I was enrolled in the band and then the Clef Club — a great community organization and old musicians' union house — which gave me access to so many opportunities, like playing with the Sun Ra Arkestra at 12 after Marshall Allen took me under his wing. I didn't know who they were at the time — I just thought it was some old people I could play with — but it meant that I learned the music on the bandstand."

In his teens, Wilkins began performing at his local church as well as at Philly jam sessions, which proved to be an invaluable training ground. Initially meeting current bandmate and bassist Daryl Johns at the Jazz House Kids summer camp when they were in their early teens, Wilkins went on to collaborate with pianist Thomas while the pair were attending Juilliard in 2015. Drummer Sumbry first played with Wilkins during a session for vibraphonist Joel Ross.

"The first time we all played together, it felt like this is what we should be doing, and so we kept it together," said the saxophonist.

Gigging regularly around New York, the band soon built a repertoire of original music that formed the basis of *Omega*.

"We had been playing as a band for about three years at that point, so we had a lot of work under our belt," Wilkins said. "We chose the music for *Omega* from about 20 compositions we had been playing live. And it soon became apparent that the unifying theme of those works was a cross between the sublime and the grotesque."

Wilkins further explained to DownBeat that his debut album, produced by pianist-composer Jason Moran (an early supporter who took the young saxophonist on his "In My Mind: Monk at Town Hall, 1959" tour in 2017), was an expression of the nuanced and often contradictory foundations of the Black American experience.

"I was confronting painful moments in our history to mine these ruins and see what comes out in those situations," Wilkins said. "The juxtaposition between that and the sublime gives you the intricacy of life that is so valuable to Black people — it's what sustains us. It's how we're able to spin the trauma and create hilarious material on Twitter; it's a specific complexity that is like salted caramel — things that shouldn't necessarily be together. I'm fascinated with that and how to create it in an aural sense."

Currently a faculty member at The New School in New York teaching the Blue Note Ensemble, Wilkins appears poised for even more fascinating things to come. He'll certainly continue to follow his perpetually evolving vision of developing emotionally charged original music that speaks directly to the Black American experience in the 20th and 21st centuries. Though, winning a DownBeat Critics Poll trifecta might prove to be a hard act to follow. **DB**

71st ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

JAZZ GROUP OF THE YEAR

DRUMMER OF THE YEAR

Terri Lyne Carrington

ON THE RIGHT PATH

By Hannah Edgar Photo by C. Andrew Hovan

When she heard her band Social Science was named DownBeat's Jazz Group of the Year for the second time, Terri Lyne Carrington was, of course, honored.

But for all her accolades — sharing stages all over the world with greats from Herbie Hancock to Wayne Shorter, winning Grammys four times over and directing a pathbreaking institute for gender equity at Berklee — Carrington's other nod, as Drummer of the Year, still floored her.

"It's something I thought would never happen," Carrington admits on a video call from her home in Boston. "It means something different because it's related to my original craft. There's a really beautiful feeling of not just satisfaction, but a message that I'm doing the right thing on the right path."

Make that things, plural. Carrington has been prolific in the past few years, even by her ever-industrious standards. In September, she released the first volume of *New Standards*, recording charts by women composers published in her lead-sheet anthology of the same name (Berklee Press). She released a children's book the same month, recounting the story of her trio with Esperanza Spalding and the late Geri Allen. And she just re-released *TLC & Friends* (1981), a from-the-vaults stunner she recorded at 16 with heavyweights George Coleman, Kenny Barron, Buster Williams and her dad, Sonny Carrington.

All the while, she's been touring with Social Science, the band she debuted with 2019's *Waiting Game*. Social Science's personnel now hinges on the same six-person core: Carrington, guitarist Matthew Stevens, pianist Aaron Parks, multi-instrumentalist Morgan Guerin (also in Art of Living, a quintet project Carrington began touring this year) and vocalists Carl "Kokayi" Walker and Debo Ray. (Founding member Kassa Overall, an MC and drummer, has since departed the group to focus on his solo ventures.)

The seed that would become Social Science was planted through texts between Carrington, Stevens and Parks, who toured Carrington's *Money Jungle* together in 2015 and have shared a jocular, easy rapport ever since. All three agree the band's chemistry and team spirit is unique — Parks describes the band collaboratively writing chord progressions during the early sessions which would become *Waiting Game*.

"Every gig, there's a moment where I'm just

like, God-damn!" Parks says. "I like that I'm perfectly happy with a gig whether or not we play an incredible, amazing individual solo — everybody in this band obviously can play a killer solo. But in addition to being a band ourselves, we can become a support band for featured artists. … It shapeshifts and creates a different container for whatever guests we might have. I think we all [agree] it's about the whole of the thing."

Indeed, *Waiting Game* features cameos from star artists like Spalding (playing on the album's all-instrumental, freely improvised second half), Rapsody and Meshell Ndegeocello. The voices of political dissidents Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal even appear on Ndegeocello's track, "No Justice (For Political Prisoners)." Abu-Jamal contributed his specially for the album in a telephone call from the Pennsylvania state correctional facility, where he remains imprisoned.

Carrington says Social Science's latest composition, "Abolition Song" — included in the band's current set lists, with music by Guerin and lyrics by Carrington — takes the anti-carceral themes of "No Justice" still further. She cites prison abolition, climate justice and health equity as among the causes the band hopes to throw its musical weight behind in a *Waiting Game* follow-up, still in the brainstorming phase.

"The themes on the first record were very clear and created a strong narrative, because the topics were just, like, boom. But I think we can also be subtle and talk about things that are branches, as opposed to just the roots," Carrington says.

Carrington admitted in an interview with Questlove last year that *Waiting Game* remains the only album in her discography she can listen to without cringing. She still feels that way, again citing the album's freshness and seamlessness.

"Even though it doesn't feel like an album by people that are deeply entrenched in jazz, it still feels like a jazz album — with odd time signatures, interesting forms and improvisation on pretty much every song," Carrington says. "Often potpourri-style records can sound like a mess. But it felt fairly cohesive, and it was definitely authentic to us."

For someone as self-critical as Carrington, she says *TLC & Friends*, her recent reissue, has gone down pretty easily, too. Chalk it up to grace for her teenage self. "I don't go back and listen to it, but when I put it on, I can smile instead of cringe because I'm so far away from it. There are so many [musical choices] that I wouldn't make now," she says.

If anything, *TLC & Friends* raises the same kind of questions that fuel Carrington's work with Berklee's Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and Next Jazz Legacy, a New Music USA partnership supporting career development for gender-marginalized jazz musicians.

Just before recording *TLC & Friends*, Carrington was noticed by Max Roach, who offered to produce her debut record. He approached Blue Note executive Bruce Lundvall, who initially OK'd the project, only for the label to suddenly and inexplicably reverse course. It wouldn't be the last time Carrington suspected unequal treatment from labels: Despite netting a Grammy nomination for *Real Life Story*, her 1989 debut on Verve Forecast, she says she spent the first 20 years of her career struggling to land record deals.

"I do feel like, traditionally, there are more limitations when it comes to women doing things. People have often asked me about glass ceilings," she says. "I never accepted any glass ceilings as a drummer. But if I look back over my career, things definitely happened. [Recording *TLC & Friends*] was just another way of doing something yourself — not letting the structures in place inhibit you from doing something. Nobody really heard the record [when it came out]. But at least I have something to say, 'Yeah, I did do this back then,' whether on Blue Note or not." **DB**

Samara Joy's BIG YEAR

By Alexa Peters Photo by Michael Jackson

It would be safe to say that Samara Joy, the 23 year-old vocalist with a spellbinding voice and sophisticated command of the jazz tradition, is having an exceptional year.

In February, Joy won both the Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album for her sophomore triumph, *Linger Awhile* (Verve) as well as the Grammy for Best New Artist — a practically unheard of honor for artists outside of the realm of pop music. And, as of this month, Joy's been recognized as Rising Star Female Vocalist of the Year and Rising Star Artist of the Year in the DownBeat Critic's Poll.

"DownBeat is one of those resources [that] I've been able to [use to] look up and find articles from everybody like Sarah Vaughan and James Brown," said Joy. "It means a lot to be recognized by an organization and a magazine that's supported jazz for so long. It means everything."

Coincidentally, on the day she spoke with DownBeat about these fresh accolades, those gleaming Grammys arrived at her parent's house. The fact that they were sent there, and not to the Bronx native's new apartment in Harlem, speaks to her humble, hardworking character, and the gratitude she feels toward her musical family, which played an important role in where she is today.

"I want to look at [the Grammys] from time to time but I don't want to see them [every day]," said Joy. "I'm only just beginning, you know? There's still more music to be made and more growth that needs to happen. I'm not saying that it isn't great. It's awesome, and I'm very happy that my parents get to experience all of this, like, 'Hey, by the way, check out my daughter.'"

Joy's father, Antonio Charles Mclendon, is a vocalist and bassist who's played widely with gospel artist Andraé Crouch, and her paternal grandparents were the founders of The Savettes, a notable Philadelphia gospel group. Naturally, Joy was singing for audiences as early as 5th grade, and by 16, she was tapped to sing in front of the gospel choir at her contemporary church, which live-streamed services all over the world. These early performance opportunities helped Joy become comfortable on stage early on — and she continues to perform with her family to this day. In December, in fact, she will tour with her family members as "Samara Joy and the McLendon Family," performing the gospel music she was raised on.

Jazz first came into Joy's life at Fordham High School for the Arts. While studying there, she was tapped as vocalist for the jazz band. She went on to win Best Vocalist at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington competition. Then she headed off to SUNY Purchase, where she says some of the more formative moments for her jazz career occurred.

For instance, it was at SUNY Purchase that Joy first met and sang with the masterful guitarist Pasquale Grosso, a visiting affiliate artist at the school who has become one of Joy's closest collaborators. Along with Grosso's appearance on

Linger Awhile, Joy performs with Grosso's trio and the pair have released several jaw-dropping YouTube videos of duo performances. Grosso's exploratory and pianistic approach to the guitar keeps Joy hooked.

"I like playing with people who are constantly seeking different ways to approach and make music. I think he's one of those people," said Joy. "I feel like we're going to move [jazz] forward steeped in tradition [and] understanding what jazz sounds like, but also [by] honoring our own creative impulses."

This passion-fueled and future-looking philosophy is evident in the way that Joy approaches music and audiences.

As she sings standards like "Misty" and "'Round Midnight" on *Linger Awhile*, she's fluent in the jazz language, but not tethered to it, as she responds on a whim to the emotional timbre of a lyric and chases down improvisational flourishes with aplomb. And, with that same sense of boundlessness, she's also done something that few jazz artists have been able to do: genuinely reach new young listeners across social media platforms, especially on TikTok, where she has nearly 600,000 followers as of this writing.

"There are a lot of people that come to my shows that say, 'This is the first exposure to jazz I have ever had ... and it's because I saw you on Instagram, Spotify ... or whatever,'" said Joy, who herself listens widely and shares with her peers a love of pop stars like Adele and Snoh Alegra. "The market and the radio are so oversaturated with everything else, I think [young people] are just not used to the sounds [of jazz]. They just don't know ... whether it's in the '50s or whether it's … a contemporary genre."

As Joy looks forward, she's pushing her artistry forward — particularly by taking interesting melodies from instrumental jazz standards and contemporary compositions and writing her own lyrics to them.

"That feels like [something] that's holding vocal jazz back, only singing standards," said Joy. "I find myself being attracted to the way [instrumentalists] interpret a standard or interpret their own composition, and I want to write lyrics to [those melodies], not necessarily to create a new song but introduce people to a melody they may not hear otherwise."

At the same time, passionate about creating even more connections for new listeners of jazz, in an authentic way. She's teaching workshops in elementary schools — in fact, she had just finished doing a workshop in New York for 7- to 11-year-olds before her call with DownBeat — and continuing to consider how to share jazz with people on her social media channels without putting the idea of saving the genre on them.

"I don't want to listen to jazz because I have to save it. I want to listen to it and play it because I like it," said Joy. "That's why I'm happy that on social media I can [come] from an authentic place, not from desperation or anything like that. I don't know if I can save it. I didn't even create it. I'm just trying to add my footprint to the genre and ... I'm glad that I can be one of the voices that advocates for it." **DB**

71st ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

COMPLETE RESULTS

JIMMY AND DENA KATZ
Cécile McLorin Salvant

COURTESY GARY SMULYAN
Gary Smulyan

KWAKU ALSTON
Herbie Hancock

MICHAEL JACKSON
Kurt Elling

Hall Of Fame

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Pharoah Sanders 73
Charles Lloyd 71
Kenny Burrell 71
John McLaughlin 60
Anthony Braxton 58
Bobby Hutcherson 56
Abdullah Ibrahim 54
Oliver Nelson 51
Paul Bley 49
Jack DeJohnette 47
Jaki Byard 45
Dee Dee Bridgewater 44
Shirley Horn 40
Ramsey Lewis 39
Bob Brookmeyer 39
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Dave Holland 36
Henry Threadgill 36
Melba Liston 36
Billy Higgins 30

VETERANS COMMITTEE VOTING

Hall Of Fame

Mario Bauza 68%
Red Norvo 68%

(Note: Artists must receive at least 66% of the Veterans Committee votes to gain entry.)

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Mary Halvorson 85
Cécile McLorin Salvant 66
Christian McBride 63
Wayne Shorter 63
Kenny Barron 52
Terence Blanchard 44
Henry Threadgill 40
James Brandon Lewis 36
Dave Liebman 34
Jason Moran 33
Chris Potter 29
Wadada Leo Smith 28
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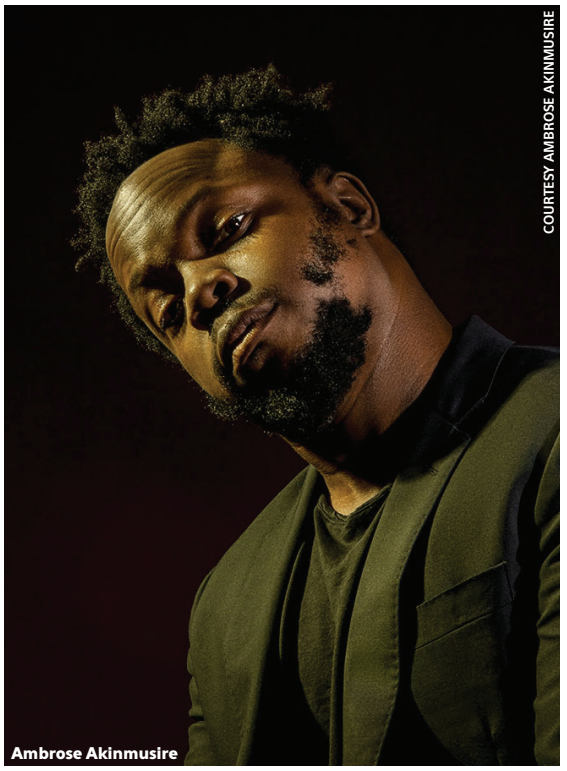
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Ambrose Akinmusire

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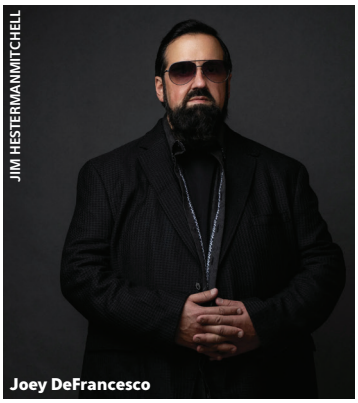
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Chien Chien Lu 81
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***Frank Alkyer:** DB

Larry Appelbaum: JazzTimes

Mirian Arbalejo: Ditirambop, Grammy

Glenn R. Astarita: All About Jazz

Mark R. Bacon: The Current, Main Event, RealWestway

Chris J. Bahnsen: DB

Peter Bastian: Jazzthetik

Bill Beuttler: DB, Boston Globe, Boston Magazine

Edward Blanco: All About Jazz, WDNA

Ross Boissoneau: Something Else Reviews, Local Spins

Philip Booth: Jazziz, Relix, Jazzlands.com

***Fred Bouchard:** New York City Jazz Review, Belmont Citizens Forum

***Herb Boyd:** DB, Amsterdam News, IBW21.com

Shaun Brady: Philadelphia Inquirer, Tidal, Jazziz, WRTI

Rainer Bratfisch: Jazz Podium

Jon Bream: Minneapolis Star Tribune

Marcela Breton: Freelance Journalist

Nelson Brill: bostonconcertreviews.com

Paweł Brodowski: Jazz Forum

Stuart Broomer: Free Jazz Blog, Musicworks, NYC Jazz Record, Point of Departure, WholeNote

Robert Bush: NYC Jazz Record, San Diego Reader, San Diego Troubadour

Enzo Capua: Musica Jazz, Umbria Jazz

Henry Carrigan:DB, Living Blues, No Depression, Folk Alley

***Aaron Cohen:** DB, Chicago Reader

Thomas Conrad: Stereophile, NYC Jazz Record

***J.D. Considine:** DB

***Paul de Barros:** DB, The Seattle Times, Earshot

C.J. de Jonge: Jazzism, Jazz Bulletin, Doctor Jazz

Anthony Dean-Harris: DB, JazzFuel, KRTU San Antonio

Laurence Donohue-Greene: NYC Jazz Record

Alain Drouot: DB, Citizen Jazz

Ken Dryden: NYC Jazz Record, Hot House, All About Jazz

Tina Louise Edwards: DB, We Jazz, Composer, Moonocle, Selamta, The Telegraph

Shannon J. Effinger: Washington Post, New York Times, NPR Music, Pitchfork

***Ed Enright:** DB

***John Ephland:** DB, All About Jazz

Steve Feeney: Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram, ArtsFuse.org

***David Franklin:** Cadence, Jazz Forum, Jazz.com, formerly JazzTimes

Takao Fujioka: Way Out West

Jon S. Garelick: DB, Boston Globe, Jazziz, Arts Fuse

Dustin Garlitz: JazzTalent.com, Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism, Sage Encyclopedia of Music and Culture

Richard Gehr: Bandcamp, Relix, Maggot Brain

Ted Gioia: *The Honest Broker*

Ludovico Granvassu: All About Jazz, All About Jazz Italia, Mondo Jazz

Steve Greenlee: JazzTimes

George Grella: Brooklyn Rail, NYC Jazz Record, The Wire, Red Hook Star-Revue

***Frank-John Hadley:** DB

***James Hale:** DB, SoundStageXperience.com

Eric Harabadian: DB, Big City Rhythm & Blues, Dearborn Press & Guide News, Music Connection, Goldmine

Kazunori Harada: Jazz Japan Magazine

George W. Harris: Jazz Weekly

Kazune Hayata: Jazz Life

Chris Heim: KMUW

Andrey Henkin: Stereophile, We Jazz, Brooklyn Rail

Geoffrey Himes: JazzTimes, Paste

Rob Hoff: WQLN, NPR, JazzErie

***Eugene Holley Jr.:** DB, Publishers Weekly, Hot House

C. Andrew Hovan: DB, All About Jazz

Dick Hovenga: Written In Music

Tom Hull: tomhull.com

Tom Ineck: KZUM Radio, Lincoln Journal Star

Michael Jackson: DB, Jazzwise, Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Reader

Willard Jenkins: DB, Independent Ear

Ammar Kalia: DB, The Guardian

Richard Kamins: Step Tempest

George Kanzler: Hot House, NYC Jazz Record

Yoshi Kato: DB, San Francisco Examiner Chronicle

Larry Kelp: KPFA-FM

Reinhard Köchl: Jazz Thing, Zeit online, Augsburger Allgemeine

Jeff Krow: Audiophile Audition

David Kunian: DB, Offbeat, NOLA Jazz Museum

William Layman: PopMatters

Angelo Leonardi: All About Jazz Italia, Musica Jazz

Martin Longley: DB, Brooklyn Rail, All About Jazz, Jazzlines, Songlines, etc.

***Suzanne Lorge:** DB, NYC Jazz Record

Phillip Lutz: DB

***Jim Macnie:** DB

***Howard Mandel:** DB, ArtsJournal.com/JazzBeyondJazz, JJANews.org

Peter Margasak: DownBeat, The Wire, Bandcamp Daily, We Jazz, Chamber Music

Ken McCallef: DB

Cree McCree: DB, Offbeat, PleaseKillMe.com

***John McDonough:** DB

Kerilie McDowall: The Discourse, Nanaimo, In The Zen

Bill Meyer: DB, The Wire, Chicago Reader, Magnet, Dusted, We Jazz

Virgil Mihaiu: DB, Steaua/Jazz Context, JAM (Jazz Montenegro)

Bill Milkowski: DB, The Absolute Sound, Jazziz, Guitar Player, Jazzthing

Ralph A. Miriello: Notes on Jazz, JJA

***Dan Morgenstern:** DB

Allen Morrison: DB, TIDAL, The Guardian

***Brian Morton:** DB, The Wire, Tablet, etc.

***John Murph:** DB, TIDAL, Smithsonian Magazine, Grammy.com, NPR Music

Joshua Myers: DB

Michael G. Nastos: Hot House, WCBN, Paradiso Dei Musicisti

Ron Netsky: City Newspaper (Rochester, New York)

***Jon Newey:** Editor In Chief, Jazzwise

Sean J. OcConnell: L.A. Times, Westways, KCET

***Dan Ouellette:** DB, Stereophile, Qwest.tv

***Ted Panken:** DB, Jazziz

Terry Perkins: DB

Alexa Peters: DB, Rolling Stone, Earshot Jazz, etc.

***Bobby Reed:** DB, HomeTheatreReview

Howard Reich: DB

Derk Richardson: The Absolute Sound, Peghead Nation

***Mark Ruffin:** Sirius XM Radio

Sebastian Scotney: London Jazz News, Jazzthetik, The Arts Desk

Gene Seymour: The Nation, CNN.com, Washington Post

***Thomas Staudter:** DB, The Gazette, NYC Jazz Record, River Journal

Denise Sullivan: DB, San Francisco Chronicle

Laurence Svirchev: misterioso.org

Otakar Svoboda: Czech Radio Vltava

***Jean Szlamowicz:** DB

Hobart Taylor: DB, KUCI-FM

Larry Reni Thomas: Jazz Corner, WCOM-FM

Chris Walker: JazzTimes, LA Jazz Scene, California Tour & Travel

Ken Weiss: Candence, Jazz Inside

Michael J. West: DB, Washington Post, Washington City Paper

***Josef Woodard:** DB, Jazziz, Santa Barbara Independent, All About Jazz

***Scott Yanow:** DB, NYC Jazz Record, Jazziz, LA Jazz Scene, Syncopated Times, Jazz Rag

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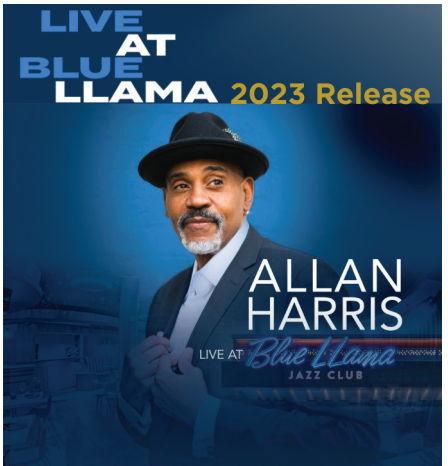

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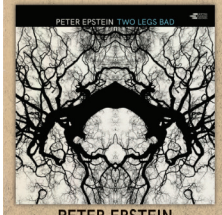
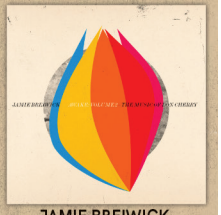
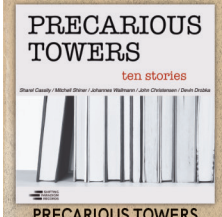


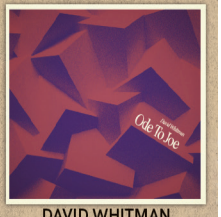
PETER EPSTEIN
TWO LEGS BAD



JAMIE BREIWICK
AWAKE: VOLUME 2



PRECARIOUS TOWERS
TEN STORIES



DAVID WHITMAN
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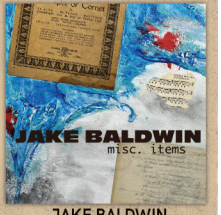
KENNY REICHERT
DEEP BREATH



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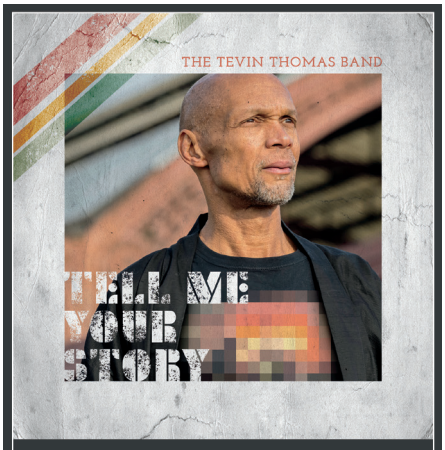

Keyboardist, producer, Oscar nominated composer Tevin Thomas lives in France. After the challenges of the world health crisis of 2019-2020, he called his NY/NJ musician friends to reunite. The Tevin Thomas Band went into Park West Studios in Brooklyn NY, where they quickly found common ground locking in on solid, jazzy, funky music, with a true sense of wonder and spiritual connection. The Band did a super charged creative two day session that resulted in this amazing recording.

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ARTHUR ELGORT

"Every sound has a color," says Javon Jackson, shown here with artist Peter Bradley, in discussing the documentary soundtrack.

JAVON JACKSON CREATES THE SOUNDTRACK FOR *WITH PETER BRADLEY*

In composing the music for *With Peter Bradley*, a brilliant new documentary on the abstract painter directed by Alex Rappoport, saxophonist Javon Jackson is also painting a series of pictures. The original music from the documentary, released on his own Solid Jackson Records, is like a full exhibit, an extended play expression of the lightheartedness and verve of the enigmatic Peter Bradley.

"Every sound has a color," said Jackson, recalling Bradley's words in a poignant moment in the documentary. "Certain keys have a certain color … whether it's red, whether it's blue, whether it's black, whether it's yellow or white."

If sound has a color, then some of the most important jazz colorists were also associates and friends of Peter Bradley. Born in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, in 1940, his adoptive father would host everyone from Miles Davis to Art Blakey in a rooming house he owned some 30 miles away from Pittsburgh. There Bradley met Blakey, which is how Jackson, a former member of the famed drummer's Jazz Messengers band, met Bradley. Yet, Jackson initially had no idea that Bradley was an artist.

"When Art Blakey passed away, I stayed in touch with Peter," Jackson recalled. "And he would come to see me play. He was just a supporter, like a big brother or uncle. But I never knew he was a painter. He never told me."

Instead, they shared in each other's love of the sartorial. "We would go shopping. He loved clothes. I love clothes," remembered Jackson.

It was only later, after Bradley's move to Saugerties, New York, rejecting the gallery scene, that he and Jackson reconnected. Now living in an 18th century stone house, and working out of a shipping contain-

er, Jackson encountered Bradley in the element that *With Peter Bradley* beautifully captures. An artist with his paint and canvases at work, attempting to bend reality to one's hopes and dreams. An honesty that is never without sound. A deep listener, Bradley's art practice incorporates jazz as a method for seeking and finding, manipulating and shaping the colors of our lives. When it was time to think about the music for such a vision, Bradley tapped Jackson to provide the sound.

Jackson's approach mirrors Bradley's practice in some respects. Upon landing the project, he sat with Rappoport to talk styles and certain moments where music would help tell Bradley's story. But in the end, it was Bradley's own musical tastes and creative spirit and those of the people around him that inspired Jackson's creative process.

"I try to evoke some of that spirit in the various compositions, Jackson said. "Knowing him and the way he spoke about his mom, I had my own melody in my mind for him and then the melody for her." The tune, "Edith Ramsey," pays moving tribute to the most significant spiritual force in Bradley's life. Jackson easily related to that force, recalling that his own mother helped create the space for his growth and evolution as a saxophonist. It was not simply a question of technique or a theoretical intervention. That would come later. For Jackson, it was his mother's injunction to "play it pretty" that set him upon this path. This esthetic choice has an even deeper resonance for Black artists in America.

While there are no explicit political messages in Bradley's art, one cannot escape the contexts driving the absence and marginalization of abstract artists of color. In fact, one of the themes of the documentary is Bradley's absence from not only the galleries, but from historical memory. Jackson's most recent album, *The Gospel According To Nikki Giovanni*, features Giovanni, a Black Arts Movement poet known for open and direct confrontation with those contexts. But Bradley's approach to art making is more subtle.

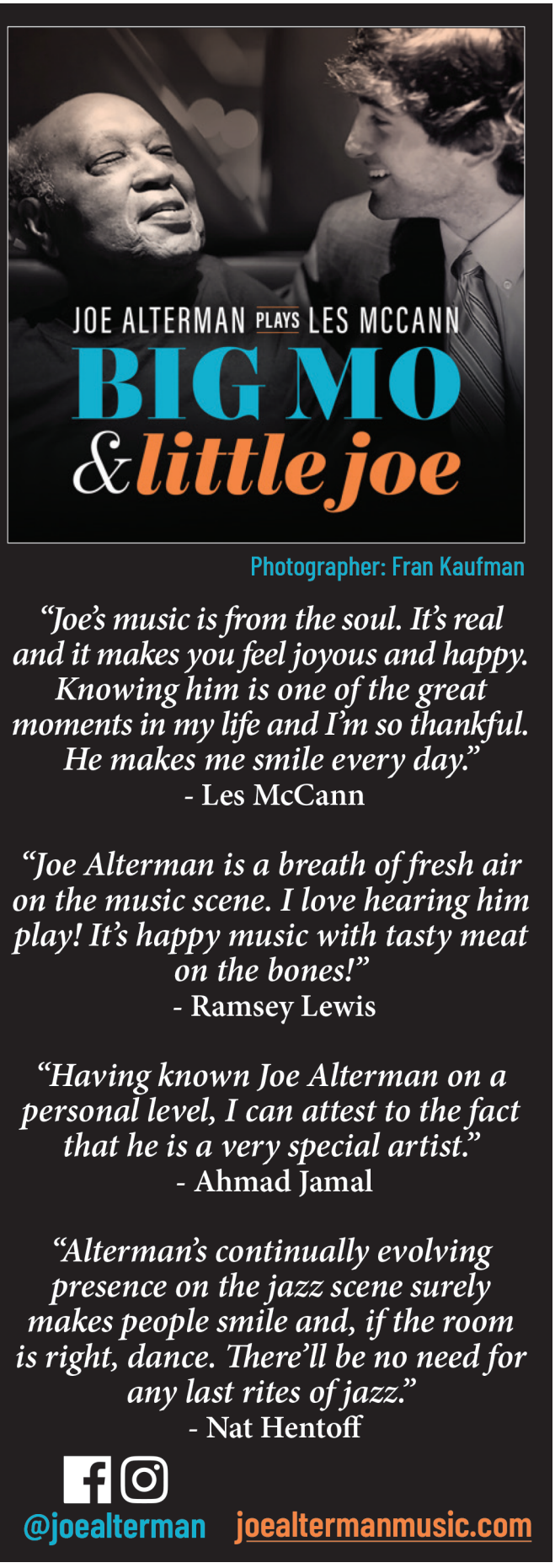
For Jackson, who is clearly inspired by both approaches, "You have to find out what it is that what you stand for. And hopefully, as John Coltrane was saying, you're a force for good and you're not one that's part of the problem. You can be part of the solution. And you can be part of something that you can feel good about."

Taken together, these two recent projects are not opposite ends of the spectrum as much as they are products of a single evolution — a way of dealing with varied experiences in unique ways. That a single musician can be equally inspired by the fiery poetry of a Giovanni and a painter who works in abstraction (with no less fiery a personality) says something about the complexity of the musical tradition we call jazz.

For Jackson, "It just goes with the territory. Because in some ways, those artists like Peter and definitely Nikki, they're going through stuff in the way that you and me don't have to. And then we'll go through stuff, and then the next generation won't have to go through as much, or it'll still come back in certain ways."

This continuous cycle is represented by the fact that the release is coming out on Solid Jackson Records, an independent label Jackson founded to gain some perspective on the music as an entrepreneur. Alongside *The Gospel According to Nikki Giovanni*, the Bradley project adds to a list that began with 2012's *Celebrating John Coltrane*. To further illustrate the continuity, the score from the documentary is coupled with four quartet tunes from the same session that produced the Giovanni project, rounding out the final album version of *With Peter Bradley*. The latter can truly be felt as a standalone statement. Still, the power of this sound is fully realized when heard alongside the visuals so artfully created by Rappoport. In grand tribute to Bradley's art, Jackson played it pretty.

There is a scene in the film that finds Bradley working with water to represent movement, offering that it does something on the canvas that a paintbrush could never accomplish. Similarly, Jackson believes that the connection his music has to art is producing a creative moment that is like "when you pour water, you can't stop it, the water just seeps everywhere." —*Joshua Myers*



Jeremy Dutton makes an auspicious debut as a leader with his new album, *Anyone Is Better Than Here*.

JASON ROSTKOWSKI

JEREMY DUTTON'S DEBUT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Since moving to New York City in 2012, Houston-born drummer Jeremy Dutton has been highly in-demand on the scene.

He's played on Blue Note recordings by pianist James Francies (2018's *Flight* and 2021's *Purest Form*) and vibraphonist Joel Ross (2019's *KingMaker* and 2020's *Who Are You?*) while also making sideman appearances with pianists Vijay Iyer and Gerald Clayton, saxophonists Chris Potter, Immanuel Wilkins, Melissa Aldana and Maria Grand, trumpeters Keyon Harrold and Marquis Hill, guitarist-singer Camila Meza and bassist Harish Raghavan.

For his auspicious debut as a leader, Dutton recruited some prominent new voices on the New York scene, including trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, saxophonist Ben Wendel and guitarist Mike Moreno as well as the aforementioned Francies and Ross. Co-produced by fellow Houston drummer Kendrick Scott, who like Dutton is a proud alumnus of H-Town's famed High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, *Anyone Is Better Than Here* is a fully realized, startlingly original first statement from a visionary drummer-composer.

Dutton is part of a rich lineage of Houston drummers, starting with his teacher and mentor Sebastian "Bash" Whittaker, the first blind student to graduate from HSPVA, and continuing with fellow HSPVA alumni Scott, Eric Harland, Chris Dave, Reggie Quinerly and Jamire Williams.

"It was really inspiring working with Sebastian," said the 29-year-old Dutton. "I was inspired as a young person by just how seriously he took the music and his depth of knowledge about everything. He also passed on his love of Art Blakey to me. In a more technical sense, we studied a lot of rudiments and a lot of feel-related things about playing the ride cymbal and some brushwork. All of it was amazing. He could play brushes like nobody else."

Dutton draws on Whittaker's example by supplying some sublime brushwork on two ballads from *Anyone Is Better Than Here*: "Mirrors" and "Dreams," the latter an atmospheric showcase for Akinmusire. Dutton's more conceptual side comes across on two ethereal pieces that bookend the album: "Opening Credits" and "Closing Sequence."

As he explained, "'Opening Credits' was a small something that I had written down many, many years ago. During pandemic time, I was going through old files and found that. Originally, it was just a piano figure and there was a recording of me playing it, somewhat poorly. But it was a reminder, and when I heard it again I sat down at the piano and started messing with it until that melody came around, and suddenly it was a whole thing. 'Closing Sequence' was just a completely new composition I wrote during the pandemic. And for me, it's about a level of endurance and just a sort of quiet calm that can bring you through moments of uncertainty."

Sequencing "Frenzy" right after the mellower "Dreams" was intentional. "The contrast between those two things was on my mind," Dutton said. "'Dream' is about this intention of where you want things to go in this sort of ideal place, then 'Frenzy' is about that sort of need, the urgency of feeling like, 'I have to get to this place, I have to achieve, I have to strive.' I think they play well right next to each other."

Other pieces like "The Mother," a meditation on the Daoist concept of nature, and the Weather Report-ish "Truman (reborn)," based on the 1998 satirical comedy-drama *The Truman Show*, reveal the full scope of Dutton's creative reach. And in terms of sheer playing, he unleashes on the kit with controlled abandon on tunes like "Vulnerable," "Unfolding," "Waves," "Shores" and "Shifts" with a power-precision pulse that brings to mind Tony Williams and others influenced by that style of playing, including Jeff "Tain" Watts, Brian Blade, Eric Harland, Tyshawn Sorey, Marcus Gilmore, Justin Brown and Chris Dave.

"Marcus Gilmore is definitely a source of inspiration to me," Dutton said. "He is one of the people who is really pushing things forward. And for me, it's a very logical extension of things that have been happening for many, many years, starting with Tony Williams, who did so much in such a short time.

"But one of the things Tony did that he doesn't get a lot of recognition for is he had a way of merging this sort of avant garde playing that he was doing with a more traditional, standard-y context. And in his approach to playing time and also soloing and even comping, as well, you start to get this real blending of this sort of free undercurrent while also still using the ride cymbal to push things forward. Plus, the precision and the power of how hard he hits are important parts of that Tony esthetic.

"So for myself and Marcus, Chris Dave and Justin Brown and all the guys who are out here right now playing these super-intense grooves and executing these super-syncopated, off-kilter rhythmic feels in such a precise and powerful manner, I think the context and the way we're doing it maybe sounds new, but in my mind it's directly related to everything that's happened before."

—Bill Milkowski

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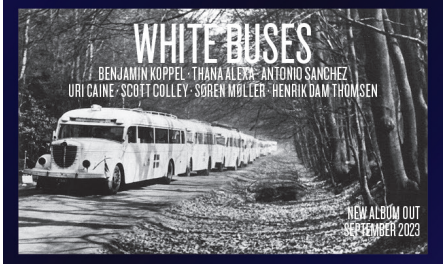

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Young Los Angeles-based jazz vocalist Matt Barber releases "The Song Is You," his 7th album since his debut in 2005.

Barber is joined by top-notch combos including the late **Bradley Young** - piano/arrangements, **Stephan Oberhoff** - guitar/strings, bassist **David Enos**, flugelhornist **Tony Guerrero**, and **Mack Goldsbury** - saxophone/piccolo.

"In the small field of creative male jazz singers, Matt Barber ranks near the top.
- Scott Yanow, jazz journalist/historian

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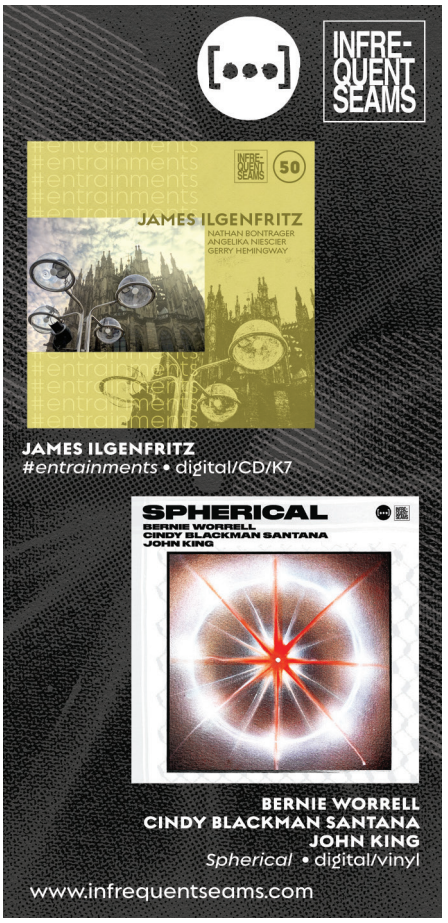

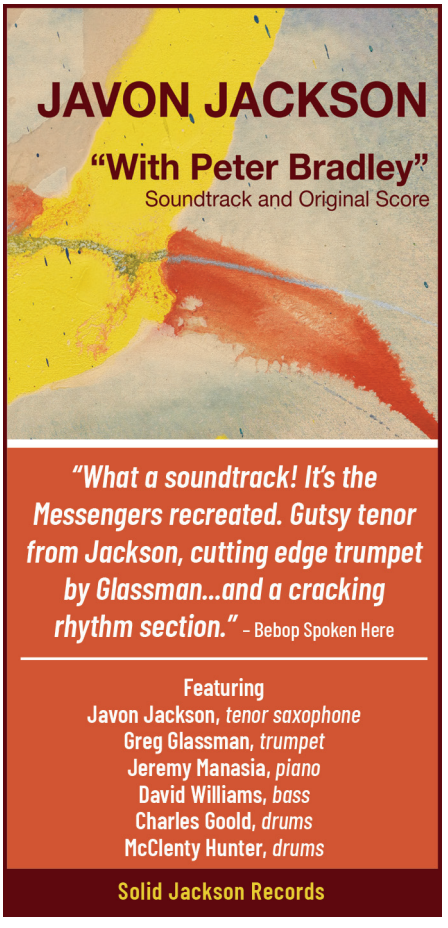

DESMOND WHITE

Erica Seguine, left, and Shon Baker.

ERICA SEGUINE & SHON BAKER: REINVENTING THE BIG BAND

The big band is alive and well and living in New York City, where a new breed of contemporary jazz composers is reinventing orchestral music for the 21st century.

Unlike the retro swing revival of the '90s, the current incarnation emerged from conservatories, not bandstands. But it's drawing enthusiasts to small clubs where young players magically stretch time and space. Who's in the vanguard? For starters, the Erica Seguine/Shon Baker Orchestra, whose stunning debut is evocatively titled *The New Day Bends Light*.

"Each composition on this album is an inner world we invite you to immerse yourself in," the co-founders write in a mission statement. It's a vision they've shared since 2011, when they first collaborated for their graduate music department recital at William Paterson University. In the ensuing years, they've become key players in New York's vibrant community of young jazz composers like Secret Society's Darcy James Argue, who produced their album.

Over a Zoom call, Seguine and Baker logged on from their respective homes in Bushwick, Brooklyn, and Boonton, New Jersey, for a lively conversation. Here are a few highlights.

Cree McCree: "Reel," the joyous Celtic opener that you wrote, Erica, uses instruments rarely associated with jazz. What's the backstory on that?

Erica Seguine: Years ago in North Carolina, I met a guy who handcrafts hammered dulcimers in a store called Song of the Wood and fell in love with the instrument. So I started learning some Celtic tunes, studied with a clarinetist who also plays tin whistle and decided to write a reel of my own.

McCree: What makes your music jazz as opposed to modern classical orchestral?

Shon Baker: An improvisational component. It's composed, but within every piece there's usually some improv.

Seguine: I've never been a huge fan of genre boundaries. But we are very orchestral, and there's a lot of classical influences as well. And Shon's music is very cinematic.

McCree: What's the biggest hurdle big-band jazz composers face?

Seguine: Unfortunately, in the jazz world, people who are primarily composers are also expected to be a performer. In the classical world, you can just be a composer. You don't have to be the first violinist. That's one reason I started conducting music: to get my music played. I love conducting music, and I was lucky that I found something that I feel is just as much my calling as composing. Now I get asked to conduct a lot of other big bands.

But that's not the case with everyone. I wish people really respected how much time it takes to write a piece of music. How much beauty there is in that. We don't ask musicians to compose all the music they play. So why do we ask composers to become professional performers to get their music played? —*Cree McCree*

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SOLSTEIN
SOLSTEIN

Featuring drummer extraordinaire Keith Carlock (Steely Dan, Toto) and multi-instrumentalist Jacob Holm-Lupo (White Willow) as well as up-and-coming guitarist Stian Larsen and keyboardists Brynjar Dambo and Bill Bressler, Solstein is a project that melds the groovier side of fusion with elements of prog and funk. The result is an album that is accessible yet adventurous, colourful, groovy and engaging. Inspired by The Crusaders, Idris Muhammed and 70s Herbie Hancock alongside Camel and Happy the Man. **OUT 7/7!**

BUSHMAN'S REVENGE
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Feifke's charts probe, prod and explore.

Steven Feifke
Catalyst

LA RESERVE/BANDSTAND PRESENTS

★★★½

Last February the moving finger of fame wrote Steven Feifke's name into Grammy history for his *Generation Gap Jazz Orchestra* CD; then, having writ, moved quickly to the next Beyoncé award. Those who pay attention to the many pre-broadcast Grammys, however, may have wondered, who is this Steven Feifke chap? *Catalyst* is his attempt to remind us and perhaps catch any lingering Grammy momentum in the process.

For a decade Feifke has led a first-rate big band out of New York — not an all-star crew to be sure, but a stable and dedicated personnel. Feifke leads from the piano and provides much of the book, which mixes numerous originals with familiar fare for dance and concert dates.

Feifke's charts have a sophisticated, middlebrow-modern sound. They probe, prod and explore possibilities, inviting high esteem for their erudition and craft. But they swing reluctantly, as if that might seem old fashioned or pandering to nostalgia. Feifke's instincts evade both reminiscence and radicalism. Music tends to build on modes rather than strong thematic centers or riffs, leaving the listener little to hold on to, even after repeated trips. The sections blend in carefully crafted layers, sometimes answering each other.

An excellent reed team mostly supports the more dominate brass. Better the other way around. When they emerge here and there on "Stablemates" and "Patience's Promise" — two of Feifke's best — the music pops to life. So too with "Tricotism," a bopish bass showcase for Dan Chmielinski, with snappy support from drummer Bryan Carter. Speaking of drummers, "Promised Land" vaguely suggests Buddy Rich's "Birdland."

Of the three vocals, "It Could Happen To You" gets a clever twist as Benny Benack sings a lead variation against an accompanying sax ensemble. Martina DaSilva skillfully guests on two ballads, particularly "Foolish Heart" with its patient pregnant pauses. —*John McDonough*

Catalyst: The Promised Land; It Could Happen To You; Stablemates; Ali Dell'Angelo; Catalyst; I Cover The Waterfront; My Foolish Heart; Tricotism; Patience's Promise; Kingpin. (76:40)

Personnel: Max Darche, John Lake, Benny Benack III, Gabe Medd, trumpets; Rob Edwards, Jeffery Miller, Javier Nero, Jennifer Wharton, trombones; Andrew Gould, Alexa Tarantino, Lucas Pino, Sam Dillon, Carl Maraghi, reeds; Alex Wintz, guitar; Steven Feifke, piano; Dan Chmielinski, bass; Bryan Carter, drums; Benack (2), Martina DaSilva (6, 7), vocals.

Ordering info: lareserverecords.com

The Pacific Jazz Group
The Pacific Jazz Group
ROPEADOPE
★★★½

The sound of producer Richard Bock and drummer Roy Harte's Pacific Jazz Records was one of spaciousness and languor, a deep-seated swing that took its time to communicate gentle melody. It was the soundtrack to a top-down drive along the Pacific Coast of its naming: the encapsulation of the sun-kissed cool of West Coast jazz throughout the 1950s.

For versatile pianist Dred Scott, Pacific Jazz has long been a touchstone, with the music created by its signees Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker and Joe Pass on heavy rotation. To honor these distinct tunes, Scott has now assembled his own Pacific Jazz Group to put their twist on the songbook.

Scott's quartet plays through several Mulligan compositions as well as a Baker standard and a Shorty Rogers rendition. Rather than sink into the Pacific feel of the originals, however, the quartet's versions are full of energy. Opener "Bernie's Tune" speeds up Mulligan's composition, launching almost immediately into a lyrical solo from Scott before saxophonist Eric Crystal interweaves his own frenetic phrases. As the record continues, it adds percussive backbone to Baker and Russ Freeman's "Maid In Mexico" and hurrying through Mulligan's "Nights At The Turntable."

The quartet's musicianship is accomplished. Crystal locks horns harmonically with Scott, while drummer Smith Dobson and bassist run with a rhythmic certainty. Yet, in increasing the dynamics and speed, the group ultimately loses its essence. It is gestured at on the descending lines of "Festive Minor," but these crisp, clean versions largely lack the hazy cool of the originals. *—Ammar Kalia*

The Pacific Jazz Group: Bernie's Tune; Maid In Mexico; Line For Lyons; Casa De Luz; Festive Minor; Nights At The Turntable; Utter Chaos. (39:25)
Personnel: Dred Scott, piano; Eric Crystal, tenor saxophone; John Wiitala, bass; Smith Dobson, drums.
Ordering info: pacificjazzgroup.bandcamp.com

Bettye LaVette
LaVette!
JAY-VEE
★★★★½

This is the album the 77-year-old singer's fans have been anticipating since her long-overdue commercial breakout in 2005. Produced by Steve Jordan and featuring 11 typically literate songs written or co-written by veteran composer Randall Bramblett, the album allows LaVette to sound salty, funny, but — above all — wise. Bramblett's typically arch lyrics create a narrative through-line previous LaVette albums have been missing.

Aside from her raw-textured, expressive voice, it's been LaVette's ability to thoroughly inhabit a song that has set her apart and allowed her to gracefully surpass the late Tina Turner as the leading older woman of soul. Adding to the superior material here are expressive cameos by a cast that includes saxophonist James Carter, organist Steve Winwood and pianist Jon Batiste, and a studio crew consistently sparked by guitarist Larry Campbell.

As producer, Jordan showcases LaVette's rich timbre and emotional range, and she consistently delivers, whether it's delivering the raw emotion of "Not Gonna Waste My Love" or the ominous, funky bravado of "Mess About It." Best of all is her masterful performance of the delightfully sardonic "Lazy (And I Know It)," anchored by a laconic bass riff by Pino Palladino.

Sassy and irrepressible, no recording has ever been more deserving of an exclamation point in its title. *—James Hale*

LaVette!: See Through Me; Don't Get Me Started; Lazy (And I Know It); Sooner Or Later; Plan B; Concrete Mind; In The Meantime; Mess About It; Hard To Be A Human; Not Gonna Waste My Love; It's Alright. (58:06)
Personnel: Bettye LaVette, vocals; Kevin Batchelor, trumpet; Clifton Anderson, trombone; James Carter, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; L. Leon Pendarvis, piano, electric piano; Jon Batiste, piano (8); Rev. Charles Hodges (4), Steve Winwood (2), organ; Larry Campbell, guitars, cittern (2); Christopher Bruce, Ray Parker Jr. (4, 8), John Mayer (7), guitars; Pino Palladino, bass; Steve Jordan, drums, percussion; Pedrito Martinez, percussion (1); Monte Croft, vibes (6); Tawatha Agee (11), Cindy Mizelle (11), Anthony Hamilton (4), vocals.
Ordering info: immediatefam.net/clients/jay-vee-records

Arooj Aftab/Vijay Iyer/ Shahzad Ismaily
Love In Exhile
VERVE
★★★

The sonic beauty of this album is undeniable. The shimmering textures, pointillistic melodic motifs, transportive Urdu vocals and suspenseful undertow all coalesce in music that sounds as if it was conceived in deep meditation. For listeners with fixed definitions of jazz, *Love In Exile* will stretch the ears and possibly test your patience, because the music eschews moldy notions of jazz and develops with unhurried grace.

That said, the feelings the music might elicit are far more memorable than the music. Perhaps that was the goal. Arooj Aftab's languid singing possesses haunting, transportive power while Shahzad Ismaily's warm electric bass and Moog synths evoke a peaceful dreaminess that gives the music body and subtle momentum. Vijay Iyer's twinkling electronics and sparse acoustic piano provide additional kinetic energy into the foil.

The music unfurls with the lofty best intentions of computer and software engineers, concocting immersive metaverses, designed for relaxed escapism.

Love In Exile contains no standout cuts but as a whole proves just as tranquil as Miles Davis' 1969 recording *In A Silent Way.* And similar to that proto-fusion classic, this album requires several concentrated listens for the music to settle in the brain, and still much of it remains elusive.

Depending on your love of 21st century jazz-laden electronic chamber music infused with Indo-Aryan melodicism, *Love In Exile* will either induce you into soul-stirring serenity or a soft-focused coma. *—John Murph*

Love In Exile: To Remain/To Return; Haseen Thi; Shadow Forces; Sajni; Eyes Of The Endless; Sharabi; To Remain/To Return (Excerpt). (60:11)
Personnel: Arooj Aftab, vocals; Vijay Iyer, piano, electronics; Shahzad Ismaily, bass, Moog synthesizers.
Ordering info: ververecords.com

The Hot Box

Critics	John McDonough	Ammar Kalia	James Hale	John Murph
Steven Feifke *Catalyst*	★★★½	★★★★	★★★	★★★½
The Pacific Jazz Group *The Pacific Jazz Group*	★★★★	★★★½	★★★½	★★★
Bettye LaVette *LaVette!*	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★½	★★★
Aftab/Iyer/Ismaily *Love In Exile*	★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Steven Feifke, *Catalyst*

Intricate, joyous and deftly arranged, this large ensemble record from Steven Feifke is an enjoyable listen. Confident takes on standards such as "It Could Happen To You" and "My Foolish Heart" sit comfortably alongside new compositions like the soaring "Ali Dell'Angelo," with Feifke giving ample space for his musicians to play out with panache. *—Ammar Kalia*

Swings hard, with pleasant arrangements of stylistically diverse material, but the band never returns to the heights reached on its mid-'60s Blue Note-influenced opener. *—James Hale*

Feifke's compositions and arrangement burst with vivaciousness, it's hard not to feel like a winner while listening to them. *—John Murph*

The Pacific Jazz Group, *The Pacific Jazz Group*

No moss growing around this peppery Preservation Hall of cool, which imagines Allen Eager in place of Mulligan and a piano instead of a second horn. Though only 30 minutes and change, Crystal and Scott catch the spirit, swing, intelligence and restraint of the period. A pleasure. *—John McDonough*

Irony-free takes on hard-swinging tunes like these are always welcome. Tenor saxophonist Eric Crystal brings the heat every time he plays. *—James Hale*

A charming homage to a West Coast label deserving wider attention and acclaim. *—John Murph*

Bettye LaVette, *LaVette!*

Bramblett's songs are more in a country groove than actual blues forms. But LaVette wrestles enough grit and gravel into these lusty chants of regret and loss to make Sondheim sound like an old blues man. *—John McDonough*

LaVette's powerhouse vocals take center stage on her latest record, worn with the warmth of a yearning vibrato that speaks of her six-decade-long career. Features from the likes of Anthony Hamilton, John Mayer and Jon Batiste pad out the 11 tracks, but the record proves unable to bolster LaVette's voice with enough musical vitality to really make it sing. *—Ammar Kalia*

Even with her weathered vibrato, LaVette continues to interpret rollicking blues songs like her life depends on it. *—John Murph*

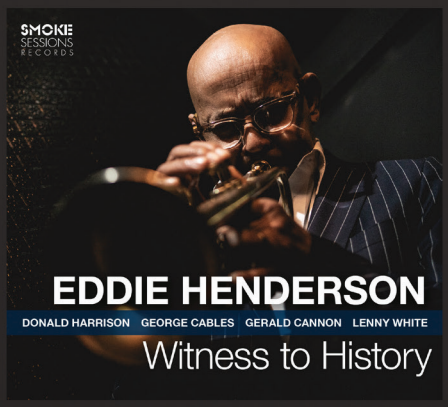
Arooj Aftab/Vijay Iyer/Shahzad Ismaily, *Love In Exile*

In the celebratory spirit of diversity, maybe I'm obliged to embrace the "timeless beauty" of these Urdu chants. But in the rigor of critical candor I must admit that music is not a universal language and warn of their tedious monotony. *—John McDonough*

A master class in mood music, vocalist Arooj Aftab's soft Urdu lyrics interweave effortlessly with keyboardist Vijay Iyer's meandering melodies and Shahzad Ismaily's ambient synth textures to produce seven tracks of percussion-less soundscapes. *Love In Exile* proves that a compelling record can be created from the gentlest of dynamics. *—Ammar Kalia*

Drenched in rich harmonic expression from all three players, this demands and rewards concentrated listening. *—James Hale*

THE SOUND OF SMOKE



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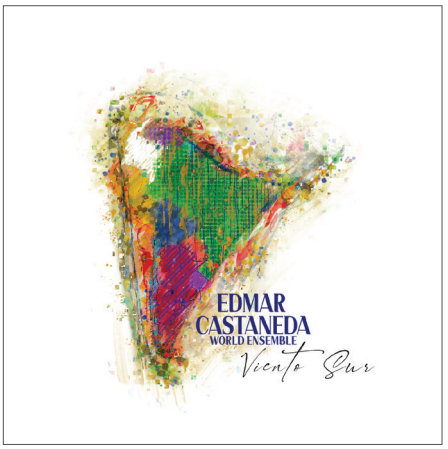


Edmar Castañeda World Ensemble
Viento Sur
INDEPENDENT RELEASE

★★★★★

This is delightfully refreshing, soulful, original, acoustic music, propelled by Latin rhythms, ensemble panache and individual brilliance. In his most ambitious project yet, acclaimed Colombian harpist Castañeda draws on and updates an amalgam of international elements, retaining authenticity while conducting modernistic transformations. His ace nonet, with members from Switzerland, Brazil, Cuba, Israel, Chile, Argentina, Colombia and the U.S., perform with gumption, balanced even during collective polyphony. Their themes are deep, but enlivening.

Castañeda's arrangements are cinematically exciting, swirling over a busy flow that he generates by treating the harp as a couple of guitars and a bass, capable of lovely resonances and chilly, sharp edges. Flutist Itai Kriss often rides atop the ensemble, harmonica player Gregoire Maret provides lyrical extensions, the lower horns offer dynamic backdrops and step out with melodic yet highly energized (Ryan Keberle!) statements of their own, while pianist Helio Alves most commendably serves the whole. Singer Andrea Tierra is compelling on four tracks, even to non-Spanish speakers.

Viento Sur means "Southern Wind." The album's foundation in Argentine, Brazilian, Cuban and Colombian dance forms does render the material generic, but launches new approaches, as Shakti recast Indian music or Return to Forever tapped Brazilian fusion. Viva Edmar and this troupe's invigorating air.

—Howard Mandel

Viento Sur: Tá Bom; Eclesiastés 9; Piedra y Camino; Arpaquito; Ventarrón; Sanar; La Vie en Chandé; Raza. (52:59)
Personnel: Edmar Castañeda, harp; Andrea Tierra, vocals; Itai Kriss, flute; Helio Alves, piano; Gregoire Maret, harmonica; Ryan Keberle, trombone; Felipe Lamoglia, saxophones; Rodrigo Villalon, drums; Marcelo Woloski, percussion.
Ordering info: edmarcastaneda.com

Nate Radley & Gary Versace
Snapshots
STEEPLECHASE

★★★½

Snapshots is a delight from beginning to end. Guitarist Nate Radley and pianist Gary Versace — both undeniably progressive players who previously worked together behind Loren Stillman, Kris Davis and Marc Mommaas — engage in a duo that feels both classic and timeless, as fresh as a late-night blowing session.

That's no mean feat considering that five of its nine tracks are Radley originals, none of them previously recorded. These get treated with a flowing bounce. It makes some of the music sound breezier than it appears. Darker passages in the bridge of the opening "Juniors," for example, slip by unnoticed under the carefree rhythm. On the other hand, "Penumbra" so thoroughly evokes the atmosphere of classic film noir that that swing bounce makes the darkness happen.

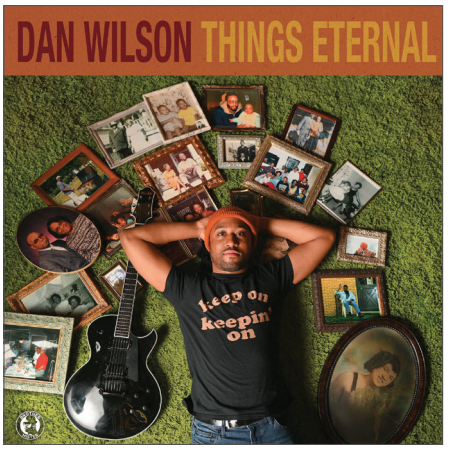
That vibrancy runs through most of the covers. "Chloe," written as tragedy, becomes downright happy-go-lucky with Versace's chipper piano lines and Radley's careful purrs. Willie Nelson's "Three Days" gets an appropriately down-home feel (though no more so than Radley's own "Big Reach"), and John Coltrane's

"Some Other Blues" gets a hefty shot of swing. The Anthony Newley ballad "Who Can I Turn To" comes close to bucking this trend, delicately constructed on Radley's spare chords and Versace's exquisite high register.

The notable exception is "Almost April," an angular, intricate piece. Radley and Versace's intertwining lines avoid getting too boisterous, bearing down on something more subtle and serious, even romantic.

—Michael J. West

Snapshots: Juniors; Big Reach; Some Other Blues; Penumbra; Almost April; Three Days; Who Can I Turn To; Wrong Ago; Chloe. (64:55)
Personnel: Nate Radley, guitar; Gary Versace, piano.
Ordering info: nateradley.com



Dan Wilson
Things Eternal
BROTHER MISTER

★★★★½

A guitarist with jaw-dropping single-note facility rivaling six-string greats George Benson and Pat Martino, Akron, Ohio, native Dan Wilson's tendency is to scorch the fretboard — as he did on "The Rhythm Section" from his stellar 2021 Mack Avenue debut, *Vessels Of Wood And Earth*, and does again here on a blazing rendition of Freddie Hubbard's "Birdlike" from his followup album, *Things Eternal*. Both examples conjure up memories of Benson's "The Cooker," the opening track to 1967's *The George Benson Cookbook*.

But Wilson is hardly a one-trick-pony, as he once again reveals on his eclectic sophomore outing. His gift for melody comes across on renditions of Stevie Wonder's "Smile Please" and Michael Brecker's "Pilgrimage," while his subdued comping behind vocalist Jessica Yafanaro on the alluring title track is patient and luxurious. Wilson's ability to swing easily and in the pocket is apparent on renditions of McCoy Tyner's waltz-time "For Tomorrow," Herbie Hancock's "Tell Me A Bedtime Story" and the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby," while his deep-seated gospel roots come to the fore on an inspired, churchified reading of Sting's "Let Your Soul Be Your Pilot."

A secret weapon throughout this session is the Fender Rhodes electric piano playing of Glenn Zaleski, who lends a '70s quality to the proceedings while matching Wilson stride-for-stride on some blazing unisons. Co-produced by Christian McBride, whose Tip City trio Wilson joined in 2017, *Things Eternal* includes a humorous voicemail at the outset of the opening track, "Sticology," from the late organist Joey DeFrancesco, with whom Wilson also toured and recorded.

—Bill Milkowski

Things Eternal: Sticology; Since A Hatchet Was A Hammer; Eleanor Rigby; For Tomorrow, Bass Intro; For Tomorrow; Things Eternal; Bird Like; Smile Please; Tell Me A Bedtime Story; Pilgrimage Intro; Pilgrimage; Let Your Soul Be Your Pilot. (66:54)
Personnel: Dan Wilson, guitar; Glenn Zaleski, Fender Rhodes electric piano; Brando Rose, bass; David Throckmorton, drums; Theron Brown, organ (11, 12); Nigel Hall (6, 8, 12), Durrell Legrair (8, 12), Tommy Lehman (8, 12), Jessica Yafanaro (12), vocals.
Ordering info: mackavenue.com

Vicente Archer
Short Stories
CELLAR LIVE
★★★★½

Even when one member of a trio is acknowledged as the leader, if they're not playing an instrument typically thought of as a lead instrument, or composing the majority of the music, their authority can be called into question by the listener.

Bassist Vicente Archer selected two highly sympathetic companions, pianist Gerald Clayton and drummer Bill Stewart, for this session, and he wrote three of the nine tunes ("Mirai," "Lighthouse" and the bluesy, loping "Bye Nashville," an album highlight), but he's mostly a support-the-music kind of bassist, not a Charles Mingus or Stanley Clarke-esque lead-from-behind type, so this disc can sometimes feel like Clayton's show, especially when he's switching from acoustic to electric depending on the track.

Archer doesn't truly come to the fore until the fourth piece, "Lighthouse," on which he overdubs himself so he's playing bass duets with a single-note keyboard ostinato giving the piece a minimalist pulse like the music of Dawn Of Midi. Clayton contributes one composition, "Round Comes Round"; Stewart brings in "Space Acres" and "Drop Of Dusk"; producer Jeremy Pelt adds "13/14"; and "Message To A Friend" is by Pat Metheny. As the album progresses, the trio subdivides; the Metheny tune is a piano-bass duo, and it all ends with two takes of Nicholas Payton's "It Takes Two To Know One" delivered by Archer and Stewart. This is a disc that unfolds slowly, and by the end the impression is one of pleasant surprise. You didn't know Vicente Archer had this in him.

—Philip Freeman

Short Stories: Mirai; Round Comes Round; Space Acres; Lighthouse; Drop Of Dusk; 13/14; Message To A Friend; Bye Nashville; It Takes Two To Know One; It Takes Two To Know One (Alternate Take). (48:40)
Personnel: Vicente Archer, bass; Gerald Clayton, piano; Bill Stewart, drums.
Ordering info: cellarlive.com

Dave McMurray
Grateful Deadication 2
BLUE NOTE
★★★★½

Dave McMurray, both literally and figuratively, plays on the name *Grateful Deadication 2*, a second offering to the iconic group, with tuneful moments from guest performers Bob James, Oteil Burbridge and Jamey Johnson. The pairing was particularly effective on "If I Had The World To Give," where a spiritual aura prevailed between McMurray and James. Of course, their blend is no surprise since they've been funking together for years. It was a tender ballad in contrast to the exuberance and vibrancy that exuded on "Playing In The Band," "Truckin'" and "Crazy Fingers." There was a delightful lull also on "To Lay Me Down," and Jamey Johnson's voice took on a prayer-like quality against Don Was' acoustic bass.

Drummer Jeff Canady lent a crafty pickup on "The Other One," emphasizing the changing rhythms as they shifted from a density of sound to the lop of wagon wheels. Dead lovers are sure to shiver in memory when hearing Burbridge's "Scarlet Begonias." Whether on saxophone or flute, McMurray has total command of the instrument, and a full panoply of sound emerges beautifully on "Bird Song."

Overall, the collaboration here is artfully and memorably calibrated, and if there's a sonic texture to the recording it's Garcia's ghost and Wayne Gerard's guitar: He seems to possess an intuitive feel for the harmonic complexities.

—Herb Boyd

Grateful Deadication 2: Playing In The Band; China Cat Sunflower; Bird Song; To Lay Me Down; Truckin'; The Other One; If I Had the World To Give; Scarlet Begonias; Crazy Fingers. (63:36)
Personnel: Daves McMurray, saxophone (1–10), flute, (2, 3), percussion (5); Bob James, acoustic piano, (6, 7); Ibrahim Jones, Don Was, bass; Jeff Canady, drums; Maurice O'Neal, piano, B-3 organ, keyboards, pennywhistle; Wayne Gerard, guitar; Larry Fratangelo, percussion; Luis Resto, keyboards; Larry Leisz, pedal steel (4); Larry Campbell, acoustic guitar (4); Jamey Johnson, vocals, acoustic guitar (4); Oteil Burbridge, vocals (8); Herschel Boone, vocal production.
Ordering info: store.bluenote.com

Orrin Evans
The Red Door
SMOKE SESSIONS
★★★★

There is certainly plenty of variety on pianist Orrin Evans' *The Red Door*, both in moods and personnel. While the core unit of Evans, bassist Robert Hurst and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith sometimes functions as a trio and occasionally as a quintet when trumpeter Nicholas Payton and Gary Thomas (on tenor and flute) join, a few of the numbers have Evans performing with the late trumpeter Wallace Roney, tenor saxophonist Larry McKenna (a Philadelphia legend), bassist Buster Williams and drummer Gene Jackson.

The music ranges from passionate group interaction to quiet ballads. On adventurous numbers, such as "Red Door" and "Weezy," the heated improvisations are frequently tempered by a catchy melody. Payton and Thomas play fairly free on the former, Thomas' work on flute on "Weezy" is impressive and the two horns are exciting on Geri Allen's "Feed The Fire," one of the set's high points. The trio numbers include "Phoebe's Strut" (which has a soulful melody worthy of Keith Jarrett), the warm ballad "Dexter's Tune" and the tender "I Have The Feeling I've Been Here Before." During those numbers, Evans displays the all-too-rare gift of letting the music breathe and speak for itself.

Jazzmeia Horn is featured on an intense "Big Small," which is part spoken word and part forceful singing. Sy Smith is fine on a heartfelt version of "Amazing Grace," while Alita Moses takes vocal honors with her very soulful work on Stevie Wonder's "They Won't Go When I Go," taken as a sparse duet with the versatile leader.

—Scott Yanow

The Red Door: Red Door; Weezy; Phoebe's Strut; The Good Life; Big Small; Dexter's Tune; Amazing Grace; Feed The Fire; All the Things You Are; Smoke Rings; They Won't Go When I Go; I Have The Feeling I've Been Here Before. (59:46)
Personnel: Orrin Evans, piano; Nicholas Payton, trumpet; Gary Thomas, tenor saxophone, flute; Robert Hurst, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums; Wallace Roney, trumpet; Larry McKenna, tenor saxophone; Buster Williams, bass; Gene Jackson, drums; Jazzmeia Horn, Sy Smith, Alita Moses, vocals.
Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com

Profound & Illuminating

Charles Mingus' status in the pantheon of jazz greats places him in the loftiest echelon as composer and general-purpose visionary. His influence on jazz to come continues to loom large long after his early calling home. His catalog is evergreen, and his uncanny paradox as a maverick modernist with respectful roots deep in jazz history (Duke Ellington was a powerful model) remains unparalleled. And yet much of the focus on Mingus' legacy tends to hover over his work in the late '50s and early '60s, despite his ongoing creative ventures in the following "me decade," so to speak, right up to his death in 1979.

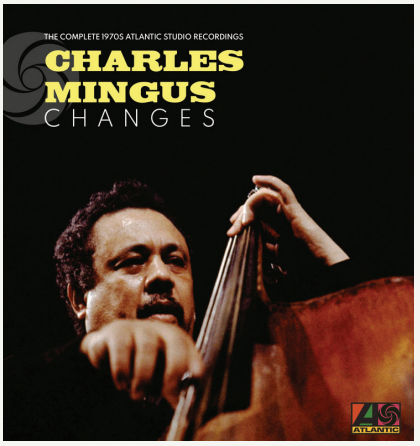
In an odd way, Mingus found his way into a popular cultural spotlight thanks to his collaboration and friendship with Joni Mitchell and her landmark album *Mingus*, released in 1979 and recorded just before and after his death. But the broader and more detour-filled saga of Mingus in the '70s is lavishly relayed by the important new box set ***Changes: The Complete 1970s Atlantic Recordings*** **(Rhino; ★★★★)**, released in the long shadow of the artist's 2022 centennial celebration.

Fittingly, the survey opens with a 1973 Atlantic release with the telling title *Mingus Moves*, which contains the most moving music of the entire seven-disc package. One of the most striking aspects is the multidimensional presence of pianist Don Pullen: His ability to shift seamlessly from playing changes to adventures in atonal, avant-garde-leaning zones supplies new fiber to Mingus' inside-outside sensibilities.

One of the album's more intriguing musical gems is the unused music for the Italian film *Todo Modo,* heard both in its original version on the 1977 album *Cumbia & Jazz Fusion* and in the form of a delectable outtake. The handsome, metamorphosing piece illustrates Mingus' strengths and imaginative orchestration ideas as a composer, beyond a strictly jazz-colored context (a flexibility that parallels his hero Duke Ellington).

Included in the set's sweep of tracks are fresh renditions of classic tunes from the Mingus book. His timeless Lester Young requiem/ballad "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," as heard on 1977's *Three Or Four Shades Of Blues*, strangely showcases speed-demon guitar riffs by Larry Carlton and Phillip Catherine. Another hyper-nimble guitarist, John McLaughlin, had recorded a meditative acoustic version of the tune for his 1971 album *My Goal's Beyond*, before Jeff Beck's gorgeous and tasteful electric guitar version on *Wired* in 1976.

Coryell's and Catherine's edgy, distorted guitar solos, which find Mingus bowing slightly towards the fusion fad of the day, reflect the faddish jazz sounds of the late-'70s. But, in retrospect, they sully the tracks they grace, including another Mingus great from *Three Or Four Shades*, "Better Git Hit In Your Soul."



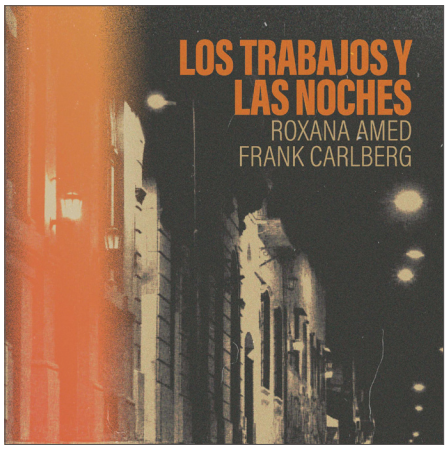
A noteworthy jewel from Mingus' balladic output is "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love," heard in a glowing instrumental version from the album *Changes One* and in a lyricized version featuring warm-toned vocalist Jackie Paris from *Changes Two* (both 1974). Other jazz tributes from the Mingus book include "For Harry Carney," a minor-mode tune distinguished by longtime Mingus ally Donnie Richmond's quirky, tom-heavy Latin pulse.

Mingus also expressed love closer to home, with compositions dedicated to his wife, Sue (who went on to tend the Mingus legacy with the Mingus Big Band and other posthumous projects), and daughter Keki. "Sue's Changes," from *Changes One*, is a powerful, suite-like piece reflecting those relationships. "Carolyn 'Keki' Mingus" is a lovely ballad sporting a heartfelt tenor solo by Michael Brecker.

Although it makes sense to end this vast chronological Mingus canvas with his finale, 1979's *Something Like A Bird*, it also makes for an anticlimactic endgame. Mingus, in the advanced stages of the ALS which would cause his death, was too ill to play on that album (and another from the same sessions, *Me, Myself An Eye*). The 30-ish minutes of the two-part title track of *Something Like A Bird* are winking in the direction of Charlie Parker, bolstered by strong post-hard-bop playing (including a bass tête á tête with Eddie Gomez and George Mraz along with strong soloing from the Brecker brothers, altoist Lee Konitz and veteran tenor player George Coleman) and energized scored sections. But it overstays its welcome. Thankfully, the brief final finale, "Farewell Farwell," basks in Mingus' personal blend of melodic gleam and a voice all his own.

Mingus circa the 1970s is ripe for reinvestigation, and *Changes* is a profound, illuminating place to start. **DB**

Ordering info: rhino.com



Roxana Amed/ Frank Carlberg
Los Trabajos y Las Noches
SONY MUSIC LATIN
★★★★

The sensual vocals, languorous melodies and brooding percussion in *Los Trabajos y Las Noches* perfectly capture the deep introspection of Argentine poet Alejandra Pizarnik's work. Named after one of Pizarnik's most famous books of poetry, the record is in heartrending communion with the poet's poignant verses and tragic tonality. Pianist-composer Frank Carlberg's bold-yet-intimate compositions explore the many facets of human emotion through Pizarnik's characteristically sparse poems, which explore heavy themes like silence, loneliness and mortality.

This is Carlberg's second collaboration with Argentine vocalist Roxana Amed, continuing their exploration of Pizarnik. For this album, they added clarinetist/saxophonist Adam Kolker, bassist Simón Willson and drummer Michael Sarin. The expanded instrumentation elevates Amed's evocative vocals and enables the band to create more layers of depth and nuance.

Carlberg and Willson move effortlessly from romantic blues-inflected lines in "Antes" to propulsive rhythmic motifs on "Crepusculo." Kolker has a versatile range as well, providing harmonic support to Amed's silky vocals on "Fronteras Inutiles" while leading with a poignant clarinet solo in "Amantes."

Amed is languid on "Pido El Silencio," lilting on "Moradas" and buoyant on "Nombrarte." She breathes life into the poet's devastating words. Her expressive vocals and striking connection to Pizarnik's words that make us feel *Los Trabajos y Las Noches* in a deep and visceral way. *—Ivana Ng*

Los Trabajos y Las Noches: Pido el silencio; Antes; Moradas; Fronteras Inútiles; Signos; Los trabajos y las noches; Crepúsculo; Verde paraíso; Nombrarte; Amantes; Del otro lado. (60:02)
Personnel: Roxana Amed, voice; Adam Kolker, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto clarinet, tenor saxophone; Frank Carlberg, piano; Simón Willson, bass; Michael Sarin, drums.

Ordering info: roxana-amed.com

Felipe Salles Interconnections Ensemble
Home Is Here
TAPESTRY
★★★★½

For the third recording by his 19-piece Interconnections Ensemble, arranger-composer Felipe Salles had a particular plot in mind. In his eight originals, he sought to explore the immigrant experience in jazz, featuring eight musicians who moved to the United States from seven countries. He interviewed each of the artists about their experiences and used their stories as inspiration.

The stories reflect the artists' backgrounds in often-dramatic fashion. For example, on Paquito D'Rivera's feature "Re-Invention," the beginning and end of the lengthy piece is classically oriented with bits of tango, Brazilian choro and especially Afro-Cuban jazz. "Meridian 63" is effectively built off of a single note repeated with vocalist Sofia Rei interacting with the ensemble.

Other numbers showcase tenor-saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart (outstanding on "Polymorphous"), the lyrical flugelhornist Nadje Noordhuis on the medium-tempo ballad "Wanderlust," singer Magos Herrara ("Two Worlds" refers to the lives that she has experienced in Mexico and New York), saxophonist Yosvany Terry on some complex Cuban-inspired jazz, guitarist Chico Pinheiro, and young tenor great Melissa Aldana.

In addition to the featured artists, solos by members of the Interconnections Ensemble include particularly rewarding statements from trumpeter Jerry Sabatini, trombonist Clayton DeWalt, bass trombonist Angel Subero, and Salles himself on soprano.

Salles' arrangements are consistently colorful, his orchestra is world class and the guest soloists inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

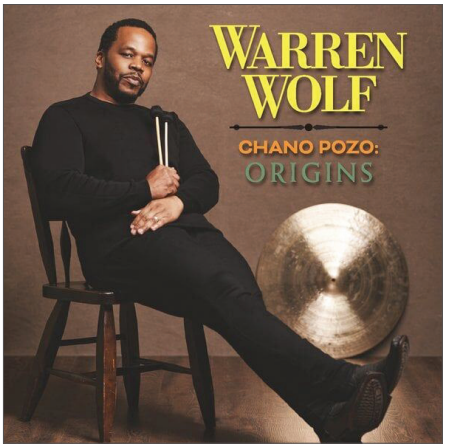
Home Is Here: Re-Invention; Meridian 63; Polymorphous; Wanderlust; Two Worlds Together; World Citizen; The Promise Of Happiness; Storytelling. (72:47)
Personnel: Felipe Salles, conductor, soprano (7); Paquito D'Rivera, alto, clarinet; Yosvany Terry, alto; Jacques Schwarz-Bart, Melissa Aldana, tenor; Nadje Noordhuis, flugelhorn; Chico Pineheiro, guitar; Sofia Rei, Magos Herrara, vocals; Don Clough, Jeff Holmes, Seth Bailey, Bill Fanning, Jerry Sabatini, trumpet, flugelhorn; Clayton DeWalt, Randy Pingrey, Bob Pilkington, trombone; Angel Subero, bass trombone; Jonathan Ball, alto, soprano, flute, piccolo; John Mastroianni, alto, soprano, flute, clarinet; Mike Caudill, tenor, soprano, flute, clarinet; Carl Clements, tenor, soprano, flute, alto flute; Tyler Burchfield, baritone, bass clarinet; Kevin Grudecki, guitar; Luke Glavanovits, vibes; Nando Michelin, piano; Keala Kaumeheiwa, bass; Bertram Lehmann, drums percussion.
Ordering info: sallesjazz.com

Warren Wolf
Chano Pozo: Origins
INDEPENDENT RELEASE
★★★★

Perhaps known by most as a vibraphonist, Warren Wolf has also long been more than proficient on both drums and keys. On *Chano Pozo: Origins*, we get all these elements in a well-produced program of music.

The opening track evokes the significance of practice — a lesson imparted to him by his father, Warren Wolf Sr. The younger Wolf, who has been teaching for almost two decades, is now imparting that lesson to his own charges. While Wolf handles the bulk of the duty on this record, one of those students, the young saxophone sensation Ebban Dorsey, joins him on several tracks as do several other Baltimore jazz stalwarts. The highlight of this convening is "Sunday Morning," which finds Wolf laying a foundation that delivers beautifully.

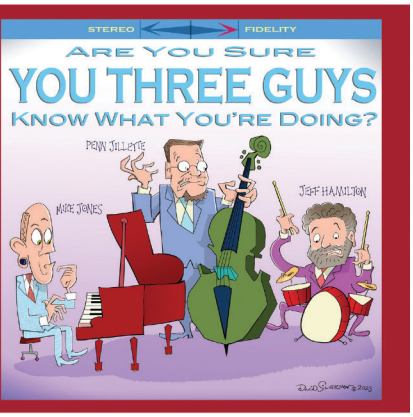
We'd be remiss to not include Wolf's warning that this is not a Latin record. The name Chano — from the Afro-Cuban legend — was given to Wolf at an early age by his father, a



mere acknowledgment of a legend in the making. —*Joshua Myers*

Chano Pozo–Origins: Intro; Sunday Morning; Havoc; Another Side; Thema E. (Interlude); Lady; Wishing I Were With You; The Struggle Continues; Outro. (40:53)
Personnel: Warren Wolf, vibraphone, drums, keyboards, rainstick, triangle, Electro Spit Talk Box; Allison Bordlemay, vocals (2, 9); Sean Jones, trumpet (2, 3, 5, 6); Ebban Dorsey, alto saxophone (2, 3, 5, 6); Adán Montes, trombone (2, 5, 6); Tim Green, alto saxophone (4); Kris Funn, bass (3); Delandria Mills, flute (2).
Ordering info: warrenwolfmusic.com

NEW RELEASE!



Follow-up their acclaimed 2018 duo release
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Expanded Arrays of Sound

In his website bio, **Mark Dresser** declares his mission "to expand the sonic, musical and expressive capabilities of the contrabass." He remains on task throughout ***Tines Of Change*** **(Pyroclastic; 58:34 ★★★★)**, his fourth solo album in a recording career that spans as many decades. Its title refers to one of the modifications wrought upon his four- and five-string instruments. They have been fitted with a secondary bridge, with attached tines, as well as multiple pickups embedded in the fingerboard. These innovations permit additional techniques — such as plucking the tines, as one would a thumb piano — and capacities. This splendidly engineered recording captures the instrument's expanded array of sounds from multiple perspectives, permitting Dresser to make a sensually involving expression of his instrument's orchestral potential.

Ordering info: pyroclasticrecords.bandcamp.com

While the whole world navigated the challenges of COVID-19, cellist **Erik Friedlander** faced a health journey of his own. In 2022, he underwent Deep Brain Stimulation surgery to treat Parkinson's Disease, whose symptoms threatened his ability to play. The fact that this record exists testifies to the fact that the treatment worked, but the experience touches it in at least other ways. The title, ***She Sees*** **(Skipstone; 47:19 ★★★½)**, refers to a witnessing goddess-like figure, whose presence Friedlander imagined as he wrote the music for this combo throughout the pandemic. How does that concept manifest in the music? Perhaps with her at his back, he felt free to write bolder, heavier music, which connects to the music that first excited him. Certainly, it has a rock edge quite distinct from the cello-forward swing, Americana-tinged melodies and electro-acoustic textures he's explored in the past. Ava Mendoza's fluent, raw-toned electric guitar leads the way, locking into drummer Diego Espinoza's big, cowbell-inflected beats. While they realize Friedlander's aspiration to rock, the cellist and bassist Stomu Takeishi sustain the intricacy of his earlier work, by providing pungent counterpoint and rich textures. Sometimes the band get too locked into elbows-out riffing. But when they balance muscularity and mystery, Friedlander and his accompanists convey exhilaration.

Ordering info: erikfriedlander.com/skipstone-records

On their self-titled debut, drummer Quin Kirchner, keyboardist Daniel Van Duerm and bassist Matthew Lux, known collectively as **KVL**, consisted of sparse, open-ended improvisations. Their methods have advanced substantially on ***Volume 2*** **(Astral Spirits/Spacetone; 34:28 ★★★★)**. Each musician focuses as much on the qualities of their sound as they do on when and where they place them, and each uses electronic effects to warp pitches, bulk up textures and throw grit into tense, galvanic beats. In particular, Duerm's electric piano and organ achieve a wavering, mirage-like quality. The tracks are shorter this time, and each concentrates on a particular gesture or sound quality, but this does not reflect a shortage of ideas. While the music flirts with free-fall, that only escalates the excitement when they lock into a groove.
Ordering info: kirchvanlux.bandcamp.com

PATRICK PAXSON
Dresser presents a sensually involving expression.

Both bassist **Joëlle Léandre** and pianist **Craig Taborn** have sustained decades-long working relationships with violist **Mat Maneri**, but they'd never played with each other before the concert that yielded ***hEARoes*** **(Rogueart; 39:40 ★★★★)**. The combination yields music that feels fresh and confident. Totally improvised at the Paris Festival Sons d'hiver in 2022, it synthesizes the stylistic potentialities of three musicians with vastly different specialties and backgrounds into supple, exploratory chamber music propelled by an abstracted sense of pulse. They prioritize the ear that is capitalized in the album's title.

Ordering info: roguart.com

Alto saxophonist **Alex LoRe** leads his regular quartet, Weirdear, on ***Evening Will Find Itself*** **(Whirlwind; 50:11 ★★★)**, his debut for the English label. His last album featured dedications to classical composers, but this one fits neatly into a post-bop compositional framework of intricate structures and shifting rhythms. Drummer Allan Mednard, bassist Desmond White and pianist Glenn Zaleski deliver immaculate executions of this demanding material, and the leader's light-toned playing is correspondingly exact. However, the tunes offer little beyond their complexity. Titles like "Face Unseen" and "Silent Ship" express this music's emotional remoteness. **DB**

Ordering info: alexlore.com

Reginald Chapman
Accretion
FRESH SELECTS
★★★★

You can tell when a bandleader/arranger has added a bass trombone to the section. Where the tuba or euphonium might pump out rich pedal notes, the low-toned slide instrument adds a demi-glace richness to the sauce every time. Reginald Chapman will never be out of work, and you'll find his name in various recent pop credits. However, this follow-up to his debut *Prototype* sees him building on the strengths of that distinguished early effort.

To get a quick sense of Chapman's horn style, check out the boldly bare, discursive opening to "There Is This Thing," on which L.A. tripsters Foxygen phone in a passionate soul declamation. Old jazz hands will more likely turn first to see what a mess he might have made of J.J. Johnson's peerlessly lovely "Lament" and will be quickly reassured; it's a glorious swirl of overtracked brass, clearly modern in production but with the old values valiantly intact. And that's the secret to Chapman's success. He's not interested in punkish deconstruction or scorched-earth updating of the repertoire. He writes himself into a distinguished brass tradition — hints of the Delta, Ellingtonian swing (with a nicely reined in vocal by Kanneka Cook), nods to Jay & Kai, Curtis Fuller and Julian Priester — but with his own intelligence and creative integrity etched into every track.

The title track emerges out of the studio mist with every promise of turning into a generic movie-set theme, but when the horns come in, the line is immediately much bolder and more associative. Only a confident artist can make so much out of such modest materials, and that's Chapman's strength. —*Brian Morton*

Accretion: Solo Lude #1; I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good); Soft Shell Crabs; Process Level Event; There Is The Thing (feat. Foxygen); B.B.-ish; Lament; Hearing Is Seeing; Solo Lude #3; Accretion; The Day Without You. (45:15)
Personnel: Reginald Chapman, bass trombone; Marcus "Tennishu" Tenney, trumpet, tenor saxophone; Andrew Randazzo, bass; Corey Fonville, drums; Kenneka Cook, Foxygen, vocals.

Ordering info: freshselects.net

Carlo Muscat/ Tony Tixier
Hymns
INDEPENDENT RELEASE

★★★★

Carlo Muscat, a saxophonist born in Malta but currently based in Paris, explores French music on this collection of duos with pianist Tony Tixier. The pianist is a French native, the twin brother of violinist Scott, and he has previously recorded several albums as a leader, some of which blend jazz with orchestral and chamber music.

This is Muscat's second collection of duos with a pianist, following 2019's *Oda*, on which he and Elena Pogulyaeva interpreted the work of several Russian composers. Here, he and Tixier are exploring well-known French songs, giving them a jazz feel.

You don't need a drummer to swing, and they prove it here. The saxophonist's explorations, which are strongly rooted in the pieces' simple, catchy melodies but nonetheless deeply felt and considered, often bring to mind Dexter Gordon. Not only the man and his introspective, historically grounded style, but also the character he played in Bernard Tavernier's *'Round Midnight* — an American in artistic exile in Paris, glad to be welcome but striving to get home.

Tixier's touch is occasionally more deliberate than the material calls for. Stately ballads like "Nuages" and "Des Ronds Dans L'Eau," which he invests with a sweeping romanticism, are more convincing than "Plus Je T'Embrasse," which doesn't have all the bounce it needs. Eventually, though, he builds up a head of steam, striking the keys with great force and seemingly propelling Muscat into the air like a child playing a game, tapping a balloon to keep it from landing on the floor. *—Philip Freeman*

Hymns: Hymne à L'Amour; Nuages; Des Ronds Dans L'Eau; Plus Je T'Embrasse; Belle Doëtte; Si Tu Vois Ma Mère; Jardin D'Hiver; Petite Fleur; The Trees Of Tollygauge; Racines. (46:30)
Personnel: Carlo Muscat, tenor saxophone; Tony Tixier, piano.
Ordering info: carlomuscat.com

Kassa Overall
Animals
WARP

★★★★

Every collaborator and every featured artist on every song on drummer/percussionist/rapper/singer/producer Kassa Overall's latest album, *Animals*, is equally listed as a composer. He's certainly the artist who crafts all these elements together, but it's astounding how well these equal parts all mold into a clearly crafted work that defies clear genre. *Animals* is doing a lot ,and it's doing it very well.

The run of songs from "Make My Way Back Home" to "So Happy" are a particularly strong twelve-and-a-half minutes, brimming with variety, boldness and the bubbling emotional cauldron that Overall has been crafting for seemingly his whole career, building to this particular amalgamated statement.

His collaborations with trumpeter Theo Croker or pianist Vijay Iyer feel as natural as his kindredness with Danny Brown or Lil B. Anne Drummond's flute solo on "Maybe We Can Stay" could pull tears.

Yes, this album melds jazz and hip-hop. It finds completeness in knowing the history of both. To deny any part of this would make the entire work collapse. *—Anthony Dean-Harris*

Animals: Anxious Anthony; Ready To Ball; Clock Ticking; Still Ain't Find Me; Make My Way Back Home; The Lava Is Calm; No It Ain't; So Happy; It's Animals; Maybe We Can Stay; The Score Was Made; Going Up. (35:34)
Personnel: Kassa Overall, drums, vocals, effects, programming, Roland 808 drum machine; Anthony Ware, saxophones (1), flute (5), clarinet (5); Stephan Crump, acoustic bass (2, 3, 5); Morgan Guerin, electric bass (2); Sullivan Fortner, piano (2, 5), keyboards (12); J Hoard, background vocals (2), vocals (10); Santosh Sharma, synth pad (2); Danny Brown, vocals (3); Wiki, vocals (3); Kris Davis, piano (3); Bendji Allonce, percussion (4), congas (6); Tomoki Sanders, tenor saxophone (4, 12), percussion (4); Ian Finkelstein, synthesizer (4, 7); Theo Croker, trumpet (4–6); Vitamin D, scratching (4, 11); Mike King, piano (4, 8–10), keyboards (12); Jherek Bichoff, acoustic sound effects (4, 6–8), string arrangements (6, 10, 12), guitar (6), bass (6); Nick Hakim, vocals (5); Burniss Travis, electric bass (5); Andrae Murchison, trombone (7); Daniel Schlett, space echo (7); Laura Mvula, vocals (8); Francis and The Lights, vocals (8, 12); BIGYUKI, bass synth (8); David Arosemena, vocals (10), Anne Drummond, flute (10), Vijay Iyer, piano (11); Charles Overall, vocals (11), Craig Taborn, keyboards (12); Lil B, vocals (12); Shabazz Palaces, vocals (12).
Ordering info: kassaoverall.bandcamp.com

Claude Diallo Situation
11:11
DOT TIME

★★★★

Swiss pianist Claude Diallo got his jazz pedigree from studying at Berklee in Boston and living in New York for 11 years. But he's also soaked up myriad influences in his worldwide travels over the years. On his seventh Situation recording, and 16th overall as a leader or co-leader, he joins stalwart bassist Luques Curtis and Columbian drummer-percussionist Túpac Mantilla on a program of tricky, odd-metered piano trio music inspired by rhythms from Africa, South America and Eastern Europe.

The buoyant opener, "African Roots," jumps back and forth from 7/8 to 4/4 while carrying a hint of Abdullah Ibrahim in the joyful bridge. Curtis' uptempo swinger "Phinish" (dedicated to the birth of his son Phineas) is a "Rhythm"-changes romp underscored by Mantilla's slick brushwork and featuring a commanding bass solo. Diallo demonstrates a strong left hand on the driving, Brazilian flavored "Goodbye Blanche Neige."

"Bona," dedicated to the Cameroonian bassist Richard Bona, and the title track are both intricate rhythmic puzzles, while the restful ballad "I Remember JSL" was composed by Swiss jazz legend Bruno Spoerri and is dedicated to Swiss journalist and music critic Jan Slawe.

Curtis' "La Finca" is a bomba-fueled nod to his Puerto Rican roots, while Diallo's jaunty, blues-drenched medium-tempo swinger "Ray Santisi" is a nod to his Berklee piano professor and mentor. And for a change of pace from the program of originals, they cover the standard "Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered" with a 7/8 twist. *—Bill Milkowski*

11:11: African Roots; Finish; Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered; Goodbye Blanche Neige; 11:11; I Remember JSL; La Finca; Ray Santisi; Bona. (50:22)
Personnel: Claude Diallo, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Túpac Mantilla, drums, percussion.
Ordering info: dottimerecords.com

Nicky Schrire
Nowhere Girl
ANZIC
★★★½

Vocalist Nicky Schrire joins the Myriad3 trio — pianist Chris Donnelly, bassist Dan Fortin and drummer Ernesto Cervini — to present an album as clear in Schrire's lyricism as in her elocution. Schrire uses this group as the ideal accompaniment for her evocative vignettes, all of them playing with the joyful ebullience she's shooting for and fitfully achieves with a clean sheen of pleasantness. It doesn't not work. It's not even cold, or even lukewarm, but in all its endeavoring to find warmth, it somehow doesn't fully achieve it.

Lead single "Traveler" is a tale of the touring musician, oozing with metatextuality and razor sharp because of it. "Love Is For The Birds" is a sprightly tune that soars with background dubbing from Schrire that sounds just as chirpy as the song's namesake birds. Tara Davidson's soprano saxophone on closer "My Love" soars and complements this sharp group, in league with guitarist Julio Sigauque. Alongside Donnelly, Fortin and Cervini, these other players fit swimmingly, playing in their pockets and ceding just the right amount of light to the star in the center.

So much of the album is reaching for cleverness and wants its gold star. Yet Schrire's precision seems to give way to preciousness that can at times feel sterile, particularly with the one-two punch of her on-the-nose lyrics and her precise pronunciation as she hits every mark on cue (albeit cues she, herself, arranged). *Nowhere Girl* doesn't necessarily have any failures but its successes feel almost perfunctory.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Nowhere Girl: Nowhere Girl; Traveler; A Morning; Closer To The Source; This Train; Father; In Paris; Heart Like A Wheel; Love Is For The Birds; Keep It Simple; My Love. (46:26)
Personnel: Nicky Schrire, vocals; Chris Donnelly, piano; Dan Fortin, bass; Ernesto Cervini, drums; Tara Davidson, alto and soprano saxophones (1, 4, 7, 11); Laila Biali, vocals (8); Julio Sigauque, guitar (11).
Ordering info: nickyschrire.bandcamp.com

Jamie Breiwick
Awake: Volume 2 The Music Of Don Cherry
SHIFTING PARADIGM
★★★½

Jamie Breiwick is a working musician in Milwaukee, a trumpeter devoted to his craft and embracing it as a trade. He cleaves toward more adventurous sounds, which partly explains why he's made two full albums surveying the music of Don Cherry, one of the most elastic and expansive music-makers of the last century.

On the first volume, Breiwick led a trio with the same rhythm section helming this effort. The music veered toward Cherry's post-bop side, but it was clear that the subject couldn't be contained to just one recording. Cherry never stopped evolving, his conception distinguished his work from postmodern hybridity.

It's admirable to see musicians recognize and celebrate that, and it's to Breiwick's credit that his embrace of Cherry's work is so holistic. There's a gem from Cherry's late-career quartet album with James Clay, where the tenor saxophonist expands the arrangement with a silken ostinato, while "Interlude With Puppets" is from a recently issued live album from the mid-'70s where bassist Tim Ipsen nicely conjures the African donso n'goni of Christer Bothén with his own playing of a Korean koto.

The album opens with "Benoego," a minimalist funk track from Cherry's last studio album where Breiwick unleashes unpitched breaths while this nimble quintet approximates the rollicking brass band exuberance of "March Of The Hobbits" originally produced by a big band. It's all well-played and there's no missing the ardor, but there's something about breaking Cherry's career into a sampler that loses the organic quality of his art.

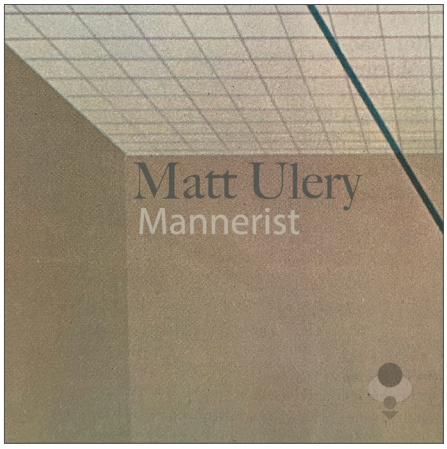
—Peter Margasak

Awake: Volume 2—The Music Of Don Cherry: Benoego; Birdboy; Ganesh: Interlude With Puppets: March of the Hobbits; Monsieur Allard. (31:22)
Personnel: Jamie Breiwick, trumpet, percussion; Lenard Simpson, alto saxophone, percussion; Chris Weller, tenor saxophone, percussion; Tim Ipsen, acoustic and electric bass, koto; Devin Drobka, drums, percussion.
Ordering info: shiftingparadigmrecords.com

Matt Ulery
Mannerist
WOOLGATHERING
★★★½

Mannerist is a surprising alchemy of whimsy and meditation. For his 14th recording as bandleader, composer and bassist Matt Ulery expands his trio with pianist Paul Bedal and drummer Jon Deitemyer to an 11-piece band with brass and woodwind sections. Members of Ensemble Dal Niente, a Chicago-based contemporary music collective, fill out these sections, bringing an expansive grasp of classical music traditions and a daring approach to experimentation that gives *Mannerist* its expansive arcs and textural complexity. The resulting ensemble is equally at ease expounding on complex chamber arrangements as they are delving into extended improvisation.

On the opening tune, "Bridges," Bedal sets the tone with a lilting waltz that underscores the woodwind section's classical treatment and grand melodies. Bedal slows it down on "The Brink Of What," a meandering big band tune that showcases Dustin Laurenzi's mentholated tenor saxophone and James Davis' sultry trumpet. The brass section builds heat with philosophical lines and blustery tone poems, taking the ballad into noir territory. "Under A Dusken

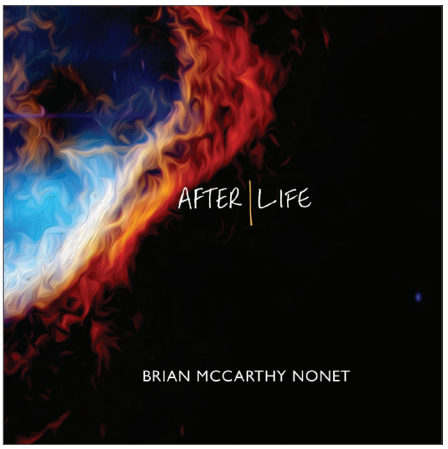


Crown" has the horns and rhythm section moving in unison through harmonic waves and introspective solos.

Mannerist explores musical traditions and arrangements at the intersection of classical and jazz, and blends them in surprising ways that make each song feel like a sweeping, cinematic work that can stand on its own.

—Ivana Ng

Mannerist: Bridges; The Brink Of What; Another Book Of Ornaments; Left Window; Under A Dusken Crown; The Prairie Is A Rolling Ocean. (45:50)
Personnel: Matt Ulery, bass; Paul Bedal, piano; Jon Deitemyer, drums; Dustin Laurenzi, tenor saxophone; James Davis, trumpet; Chris Stuttleworth, trombone; Zachary Good, clarinet; Andrew Nogal, oboe; Ben Roidl-Ward, bassoon; Constance Volk, flute; Matthew Oliphant, French horn.
Ordering info: mattulery.com



Brian McCarthy
After|Life
TRUTH REVOLUTION

★★★

Saxophonist-arranger-composer Brian McCarthy's second concept album for nonet tackles the biggest possible theme — the state of the universe — from an expansive jazz perspective.

He opens by evoking *In A Silent Way*, alludes to "A Love Supreme" in his first solo and "I Got Rhythm" in the chart of "The Beginning." Chorale-like horns introduce precise little-big-band orchestration, and McCarthy blows passionately, as do his colleagues, over a rhythm trio that provides essential structural support, also capably stretching out.

Although all the individuals players get showcase episodes, it's McCarthy's writing for the ensemble that predominates, advantageously and not.

The 18-minute, three-part titular composition ranges from an easygoing early-'60s swing feel through balladry with flugel-soprano interplay and lush backdrops. It develops into a spirited, backbeat-founded collective denouement. However, the melodic material at points is lost instead of enhanced by the horns' offset and intersecting parts.

After|Life concludes with a piece named for humankind's first ancestor and NASA's mission to study our solar system's formation. It's wistful rather than exploratory, but do not be discouraged.

If McCarthy has found that applying conventions of contemporary jazz to eternal cosmic questions is problematic, he also shows it's worth the effort. —*Howard Mandel*

After|Life: Nebula; The Beginning; Flux; Kepler's Law; After|Life Movement I; After|Life movement II; After|Life Movement III; Lucy. (63:06)
Personnel: Brian McCarthy, alto and soprano saxophones; Bill Mobley, trumpet, flugelhorn; Daniel Ian Smith, Stantawn Kendrick, tenor saxophones; Andrew Gutauskas, baritone saxophone; Cameron McManus, trombone; Matt Aronoff, bass; Justin Kauflin, piano; Jared Schonig, drums.
Ordering info: brianmccarthyjazz.com

The Rumble Ft. Chief Joseph Boudreaux
Live At The Maple Leaf
INDEPENDENT RELEASE

★★★

A couple of cliché/shortcuts that critics like to use: Sometimes, to give a generalized (but somewhat aggressive) sense of overall approval, one says, "If you don't dig this one, make an appointment with your physician," meaning you're dead either from the neck up or the waist down. Well, I'm booked in for an EKG Monday morning, because this one left me not exactly cold but unconvinced. This is where the second useful cliché gets useful: You had to be there.

I guess you did. There are some live albums that have so much atmos that isn't an issue, and with reasonably immersive modern recording, it's more frequently the case. Others, though, seem like gig souvenirs, preferably complete with a Sharpie'd autograph on the cover.

Everyone knows that the music of the New Orleans parade scene has a privileged place in the evolution of jazz and other musical vernaculars. One can hear where the Neville Brothers got their vibe, and where relative jazz mainstreamers like Donald Harrison Jr. found energies that didn't come direct from bop. But one also knows that this music has become part of

a mythology that often tries so hard to convince us of its life-affirming philosophy it actually becomes quite deadening, even given Chief Boudreaux's charismatic presence. So maybe I have to recuse myself on the grounds of cardiological or orthopedic insufficiency and hope you feel like you were really there. —*Brian Morton*

Live At The Maple Leaf: Intro (Universe how y'all feeling?); Up Until The Morning; Uptown; Bow Down; Morning Glory; Golden Crown; Trouble; My People; New Suit; Chief Got A New Suit; Take It Back; Wildman; Second Line Girl; We Are The Rumble; (bonus tracks) Lil Liza Jane; Sew Sew Sew. (77:00)
Personnel: Chief Joseph Boudreaux Jr., vocal, tambourine; Aurelian Barnes, trumpet, vocal; Joseph "Jose" Maize, trombone, vocal; Amari Ansari, tenor saxophone; Andriu Yanovski, organ, clavinet, keyboards, vocal; Ari Teitel, guitar, vocal; TJ Norris, bass, vocal; Trenton O'Neal, drums; Pedro Segundo, percussion.
Ordering info: therumbleband.com

Benny Benack III
Third Time's The Charm
LA RESERVE/BANDSTAND PRESENTS

★★★

The title is apropos, and not just because it's trumpeter/vocalist Benny Benack III's third album. It's also a charm offensive. This one features a lot more than just him, with a whole roster of special guests adding luster to what is indeed a charming collection.

Certainly there's no better word for Benack's velvet-voiced delivery on tunes like "I'll Never Fall In Love Again," where you can hear the twinkle in his eye, or "In A Mellow Tone," on which he and guest Bria Skonberg barely contain their chemistry — ditto the scat exchange with Michael Stephenson on "Pretty Eyed Baby." He even manages to craft charming arrangements, as on "Gary, Indiana," to which he appends Louis Armstrong's trumpet coda from his recording of "That's My Home."

What's really impressive, though, is that he brings the same elan to the album's instrumental aspect. If his vocal on "American Woman" is a little questionable, the song's sparse duo of trumpet and Russell Hall's bass is gritty and electrifying. A pair of soulful originals, "Scootin'" and "Catching Drift," are hard-bop in their milieu; there's also a bewitching slow jam ("Twilight Blue") and a funky workout ("Roylike"). Yet each one is as at home here as are the cabaret swing of his vocal tunes. Guest saxophonists Stephenson and Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, as well as guitarist Peter Bernstein, bring the goods. Yet, aside from Benack, *Third Time's The Charm*'s MVP is surely Emmet Cohen, whose pianism is crisp, lyrical and brimming with panache. —*Michael J. West*

Third Time's The Charm: Third Time's the Charm; I'll Never Fall in Love Again; Scootin'; Catching Drift; Thank You for the Heartbreak; Gary, Indiana; In A Mellow Tone; It's Not Unusual; Twilight Blue; Roylike; Jade; American Woman; Giselle; Pretty Eyed Baby. (64:53)
Personnel: Benny Benack III, trumpet, vocals; Emmet Cohen, piano; Russell Hall, bass; Kyle Poole, drums; Peter Bernstein, guitar (3,5,11); Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, tenor saxophone (4,9); Bria Skonberg, trumpet, vocals (7); Michael Stephenson, tenor saxophone (10), vocals (14).
Ordering info: lareserverecords.com

Singing & Swinging

The team of singer Martina DaSilva and bassist Dan Chmielinski (which is known as **Chimytina**) are featured on the LP ***Milky Way*** **(La Reserve; 43:01 ★★★★½)** along with one or two guests on seven of the 10 selections. They mostly perform standards plus two excellent originals and David Bowie's "Life On Mars." DaSilva has a lovely voice with a wide range, and both she and the bassist are swinging improvisers who sound relaxed in this intimate setting while stretching themselves and never seeming to run out of fresh ideas. The guests (guitarists Gabe Schnider and Dida Pelled, saxophonists Chad LB, Lucas Pino and Grace Kelly, vibraphonists Joel Ross and Sasha Berliner, and singer Mike Stephenson) all get individual spots and add color and variety to the music. Chimytina is actually strong enough by itself not to need any additions, although Ross' vibes on the charming version of "Take A Picture Of The Moon" is delightful.

Ordering info: lareserverecords.com

One of Canada's top jazz singers (although she currently lives in Mexico), **Emilie-Claire Barlow** released her first full-length recording in five years. Her very attractive voice is heard in prime form throughout ***Spark Bird*** **(Empress Music; 36:01 ★★★★)**, a set of music dedicated to birds. While a few of the pieces are a bit more contemporary, the swinging numbers such as "Skylark" (which begins with a tender duet with guitarist Reg Schwager), Stevie Wonder's "Bird Of Beauty" (given a Latin groove) and "Little Jazz Bird" are a real joy. While one regrets the brevity of this set, there are many fine moments from the singer and such sidemen as Schwager, tenor-saxophonist Kelly Jefferson, flutist Bill McBirnie and pianist Chris Donnelly.

Ordering info: empressmusicgroup.com

A fine jazz singer originally from Montreal, **Mira Choquette** is teamed with a trio from Toronto (pianist Ewen Farncombe, bassist Josh Goldman and drummer Morgan Childs) on her recent EP, ***In Reel Time*** **(Independent Release; 31:51 ★★★★)**. She and her sidemen are often very much in the 1950s jazz style with Ella Fitzgerald being an obvious influence. There are departures, including a credible version of a Harry Belafonte calypso ("Jump In The Line"), an emotional ballad in French ("Ne Me Quitte Pas") and Stevie Wonder's "Overjoyed." But it is for the more vintage pieces (including "No Moon At All," "Just One Of Those Things" (with its rarely heard verse) and a cooking "What Is This Thing Called Love") plus an original ("Love Crime," which sounds as if it could be from 1936) that are highly recommended. Choquette and the boppish pianist Farncombe provide plenty of bright moments.

Ordering info: mirachoquette.bandcamp.com

COURTESY LA RESERVE

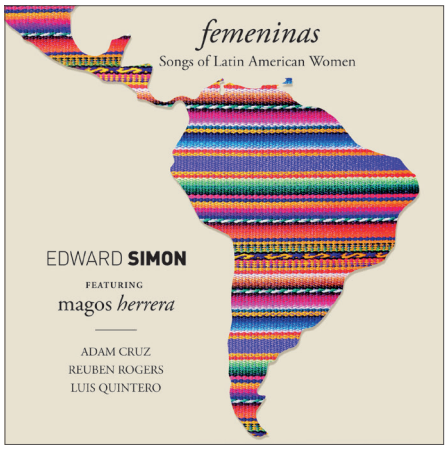
Martina DaSilva and Dan Chmielinski together are known as Chimytina.

Singer-guitarist **Jonathan Butler,** the best-known of these five vocalists, blends together his South African musical heritage with pop, light R&B, and the funkier side of jazz. For ***Ubuntu*** **(Artistry Music; 56:38 ★★½)**, he meets up with Marcus Miller, who not only was the project's producer but can be heard on bass guitar, keyboards, bass clarinet, piano, drums and tenor sax. Butler utilizes both South African and American musicians with Stevie Wonder guesting on harmonica on his "Superwoman," Keb' Mo' helping with the singing on "When Love Comes In" and pianist Russell Ferrante playing on the easy-listening "Peace With Shelter," a number that he co-wrote with Butler. Falling more into the "beyond" category, the music is good-natured but not very adventurous. The catchy title cut is the most memorable performance.

Ordering info: jonathanbutler.com

Elina Duni was born in Albania, first sang on radio and television when she was 5, and at the age of 10 settled in Geneva with her mother. Since then she has sung a combination of Balkan folk songs and jazz, working with the British guitarist Rob Luft since 2017. ***A Time To Remember*** **(ECM; 53:44 ★★★½)** has Duni featured with the same quartet on which she had recorded 2020's *Lost Ships*: Luft, flugelhornist Matthieu Michel and Fred Thomas on piano and drums. Duni, who can sing in nine different languages, is heard in English on roughly half of the songs. She has a warm and sometimes haunting voice that is quite suitable for the folkish melodies, particularly the ballads. She does not improvise much, but Michel (who blends in well with the singer) and Luft give the music some jazz content. On a program that includes originals by Duni and Luft and traditional songs from Albania and Kosovo, her rendition of Charlie Haden's classic "First Song" is a highlight. **DB**

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Edward Simon
Femeninas: Songs Of Latin American Women
ARTISTSHARE

★★★

First things first: *Femeninas: Songs Of Latin American Women* lists vocalist Magos Herrera as a special guest, which is ridiculous: She's on every track and sits alongside leader/pianist Edward Simon as the ensemble's dominant personality. At the very least she should be billed as a featured player.

That said, *Femeninas* has much to offer. Eight of its 11 tunes were (as the title states) written by Latina composers and each one is as worthy on its own as it is for improvisers to explore. The band attacks the two standards, Chabuca Granda's "La Flor de la Canela" and Violet Parra's "Gracias A La Vida," with all the gravitas of a Latin melodrama. Already a contralto, Herrera adopts an extra (and effective) layer of huskiness for the songs, Simon and percussionist Luis Quintero (on cajon) beating out a flamenco-like rhythm behind her on the former while the pianist joins with bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Adam Cruz softly swing-waltz on the latter. Yet there's also bliss to be had, as on the album's two Brazilian tunes (with gorgeous rhythm guitar from Romero Lubambo), Rosa Passos' gentle samba "Dunas" and Joyce Moreno's giddy "Feminina."

The album's centerpiece is *Latino Soy*, a new three-part suite by the Venezuelan Simon. It has a seriousness that eclipses even the aforementioned melodramas: Herreras, for example, intones a somber spoken-word verse on the opening movement "Mujer Remolino." It's offset with moments of great beauty like Rogers' bass solo on "Naked Sky" and Simon's on "Tierra Movida." Even so, it takes itself perhaps a tad too seriously. *—Michael J. West*

Femeninas: Songs Of Latin American Women: Feminina; Decimas; La Flor de la Canela; Gracias A La Vida; Palabras; Dunas; Mujer Remolino; Naked Sky; Tierra Movida; Buleria; Hacia Donde. (64:39)
Personnel: Edward Simon, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Adam Cruz, drums; Magos Herrera, vocals; Luis Quintero, percussion; Romero Lubambo, guitar. (1, 6).

Ordering info: edwardsimon.com

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RENÉ PIERRE ALLAIN/NYC

"All of us already sound like ourselves and can remain distinct throughout our lives, no matter our age or experience, and we can choose to capitalize on this reality," Haynes says.

10 Paths to a Personal Sound and Style

Decades ago, I performed at the Vancouver International Jazz Festival for the first time. Upon my arrival, producer Ken Pickering asked me to cover for Joey Baron's drum clinic. I had never given a master class to such a group of diverse learners, from about age 10 through 80, and I had just enough time to become nervous while being rushed to the venue.

I emerged on stage to an audience of dozens of percussionists eager to hear about and learn from Joey's more famous experiences, approaches and insights. After an emcee outlined the coming week's many concerts on which I would be featured, I hastily greeted the audience. Feeling uninspired to play anything for them as an introduction, I simply opened the floor to questions. A hand immediately grabbed my attention, and an older gentleman took me by surprise, asking, "Mr. Haynes, how did you develop such a unique sound and style so early in your career?" Perhaps I should have anticipated that clinic attendees interested in Joey would have likely already checked out other up-and-comers in New York? No matter, as his question centered me. I immediately began improvising, asking for four volunteers of varied ages to come up and play a bit.

As my percussive kin lined up next to me onstage, I sat down and played a short phrase of what I described as "Rock Beat 1A" in a straightforward moderate tempo, cycling a *boom-chick*, *boom-boom-chick* pattern with eighth notes flowing from the ride cymbal. I handed my sticks to the first volunteer and had them perform the same familiar pattern, then the next, the next, and the next. I then asked our audience what they noticed when listening to the five of us. It was apparent that not one of us sounded at all like the others.

I began with the premise that all of us already sound like ourselves and can remain distinct throughout our lives, no matter our age or experience, and we can choose to capitalize on this reality. I now relaxed and gained momentum, beginning to describe my own journey and tactics to develop a notable personal voice and style. Or, as bassist Mark Dresser later pointed out, "You got down to talking about your favorite subject — *you*."

The following is much of what I would cover in such a workshop today, having time to reflect and prepare more appropriately. Simply put, one's attitude and mindset are crucial (always), as seemingly small things "not quite like the others" can add up to reveal any budding artist's originality.

1. Practicing with recordings by the masters is a pivotal stage of any young jazz musician's development. My earliest experiences with music, at age 2, involved collecting found instruments (pots, pans, coffee cans, oatmeal boxes), arraying them in front of me and using fingertips, Lincoln Logs or knitting needles as sticks to play along with the radio or other commercial recording sources. While at this age I certainly couldn't replicate what was on those recordings, I could add a fresh personal part to the orchestration, as well as eventually craft simplified "skeleton patterns" (the percussive rhythm's DNA) gleaned from the original artists to learn and build upon. While no one is listening to you in such an approach, it becomes far easier to play live with those who are listening and interacting. Plus, it's much more engaging than working with a metronome.

2. Re-listen and evaluate yourself consistently and as objectively as possible, including with trusted, experienced colleagues. Group listening can help moderate an overly critical mindset. After all, if you can't learn to please yourself, granting yourself a license to create openly, you are unlikely to please others in any lasting way. I also developed a somewhat related habit of repeating any idea that didn't come out quite right, performing it in-the-moment three or more times acceptably, before continuing on with any additional stream-of-consciousness efforts. I was heartened decades later by reading

an interview with bass innovator Scott LaFaro (Bill Evans' early 1960s bassist), who described one of his own primary practice-performance methods all but identically. Always repeat "the good," then develop it.

3. Dissatisfied with my own early performances when confronted by their recordings, instead of dwelling on my perceived shortcomings I fortuitously began a habit of transcribing the few fills or phrases that I actually did find distinctive (fresh from my subconscious), then took them to the woodshed with my "musician's microscope" to fully incorporate and eventually master such patterns. Added to my other transcription efforts, this technique became a real difference-maker. After all, we don't listen to the masters to hear them copy an earlier luminary's language, so why should we compare and critique ourselves any differently?

4. Improvise via alternating themes with your own variations upon them. In 1981, I met Ornette Coleman's legendary percussionist, Edward Blackwell. My initial question to him was, "What does an aspiring drummer need to prepare for the international stage?" Without hesitation, he responded: "Max Roach and the rudiments." Later in Blackwell's drumming master class, he wrote on the board a two-measure phrase, clearly in his own signature style, asking each of his participants to memorize it. Then he directed us, in turn, to perform his phrase accurately.

Once satisfied, Blackwell continued (paraphrasing), "Now, play my sequence and follow it with a similar sounding variation of your own, and keep repeating and honing the combined new phrase until you seriously dig it." Eventually, he instructed, "OK, now never repeat my pattern but improvise similarly, in the same style, with your own ideas, only still maintaining the groove spirit I supplied, while performing so as not to repeat yourself for more than a beat or three." Eureka! Such approaches lead directly to a more "horizontal" approach and advances toward expressive originality.

5. Once a desired influence has been readily imitated, such as, say, Jon Christianson's late-'70s and '80s cymbal feels for various ECM artists, next ask: How can I personalize this approach? May I actually add or subtract to/from it without losing its essence, the genius of the stylistic contribution? This, of course, is the concrete succeeding step in evolving toward true artistry (versus as a skilled stylist) now wielding a personal voice with a notable point-of-view, crafting plus contributing one's individual conception and content.

6. Whenever selecting instruments, implements, heads, mutes, electronics, etc., weigh the musical applications intended for them. Gauge the sound and touch characteristics you hope to create, as well as consider what your budgetary reality may actually afford. Always trust your own ears and taste — and never take another's opinion as "gospel" unless you have confirmed it for yourself.

For instance, while small Gretsch kits continue to be the gold standard in jazz, I repeatedly shied away from them, instead searching for other makers with a contrasting sound profile I deemed just as good, yet distinct. I first discovered that the affordable midline Tour Series by Yamaha, with their laminated birch and mahogany shells of the period, always grabbed my ear's attention. Tuned in a singing, wide-open and nearly classical music aesthetic, they sounded terrific and immediately yielded the fresh tonal palette I was searching for — especially when utilizing iconic styles innovated by Elvin Jones or Tony Williams in the 1960s (via Gretsch drums), or those of Jack DeJohnette in the 1970s and '80s (on Sonor kits). A decade later, I was honored to endorse Ray Ayotte's wooden hoop instruments, out of Vancouver, Canada, now fully realizing the personal drum sound I'd pursued for years.

7. Identify techniques in your playing you enjoy, which appear to be underrepresented among contemporaries and the masters, as this can become another effective separator. After my first couple of years in college, and then once I arrived in New York, I recall consciously resolving to feature more expressive brush, mallet and hand/finger works. I also developed cymbal overtone harmonies that were more than mere sound effects, working instead to suggest graceful harmonic developments and/or brief melodic motifs. Regularly, too, I explored incorporating techniques, sounds or conceptions generally associated with the European classical tradition's "new music," frequently integrating them into more traditional vehicles, as well as modernist jazz settings, for the sake of freshness.

8. Assemble new groups by employing favorite available performers you have obvious chemistry with — not by filling out some predetermined stock instrumentation or hiring who's popular. Additionally, never shy away from atypical instrumental groupings if the sound and approach of the consort show promise, as distinctive collections of notable artistic voices generally lead to fresh ensemble expression expeditiously. Learn each collaborator's favorite and distinctive tessituras, their colors, interpretive inclinations, projection traits, etc., then arrange and compose with them directly in mind.

Duke Ellington often said his own orchestra was akin to a collection of personalities, "voices" to compose for rather than merely arranging for some stock big band instrumentation. Genius.

9. Create set sequences for concerts akin to what you would want to present in a through-composed "concept album" such as Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* or Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*. Once each and every composition is framed to greatest advantage by those around it (noting especially the anticipated momentum of your tune order), developed convincingly and hopefully memorably from beginning through end (resulting in growing depth with successive listenings), you'll be able to communicate more impactfully in all of your performances and documents (overtly, subtly and subliminally).

10. Begin to arrange and compose just as soon as opportunity or inspiration occurs. This is the key/central approach toward developing one's authoritative voice, so do not delay. Know that inspiration makes itself particularly scarce if we don't provide it with regular fertile opportunity. Perhaps instead of dwelling in procrastination, begin straightforwardly by reharmonizing a favorite compact standard, such as Gershwin's "Summertime," from just fresh roots initially (slash-chord style) for each of the original tune's harmonies. When satisfied, craft a new melody over your adaptation after weighing changes to the sequence's meter, tempo, feel and harmonic pacing — potentially even adding other complementary sections to your evolving form (as simple as a pedal point vamp figure).

Or, get started with another tactic entirely. Notate a sequence of catchy, connecting rhythmic phrases that cycle nicely, then select corresponding melodic note choices of compelling character, in an appropriate instrumental range, to produce an original theme. Then construct an interconnected yet clearly contrasting bass part (your root progression) and derive an effective set of harmonic changes from your drafted outer voices, crafted by ear — such that you actually get a bit of a thrill from their sound — then finish editing and polishing your complete original effort. You can (and should) always analyze your efforts later, well after your ears have approved. **DB**

Veteran drummer/composer Phil Haynes is featured on more than 85 releases from numerous American and European record labels. He has collaborated with many of the seminal musicians of this generation, and his creative outlets include the "jazz-grass" Americana string band Free Country; the saxophone trio No Fast Food; the piano trio Day Dream featuring Steve Rudolph; and Haynes' singular solo project, Sanctuary. Currently, Haynes teaches improvisation at Bucknell University. He recently launched an ambitious three-year schedule of releases with *Coda(s)*, the striking third album from his trio No Fast Food with saxophonist David Liebman and bassist Drew Gress, followed this fall with his memoir *Chasing the Masters* (chasingthemasters.com) accompanied by an audio compilation, *A Life Improvised*. Visit him online at philhaynesmusic.bandcamp.com/music.

Durso explores how to take scale and chord cues, as well as rhythmic material, and apply it to the Sonny Rollins blues "Tenor Madness."

Finding Improv Inspiration in a Composition's Melody

A technique that used to be common in jazz, though in my opinion is not exploited as much as it could be, is to base the solo off of the melody. This is not only a great way of making the solo sound like a part of the song, but can also be a means of getting inspiration as to what to play.

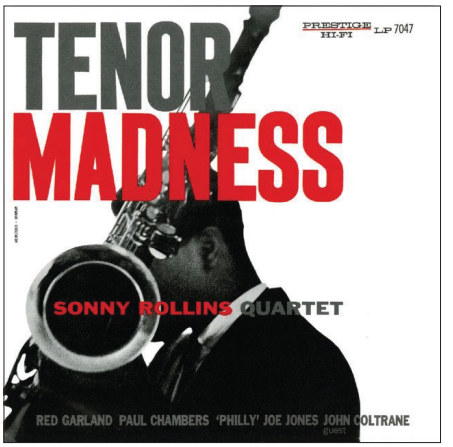
There are numerous ways of doing this, and we're going to explore how to take scale and chord cues, as well as rhythmic material and apply it to the Sonny Rollins blues "Tenor Madness" (from the 1956 Prestige album of the same name). We won't reprint the full lead sheet here for legal reasons, but it should be available in numerous places; or, even better, figure out the melody yourself, by ear.

Let's take a look at some of the choices Rollins made in the melody. In bars 1, 3–4, 7–8 and 10–12 we hear B♭ major pentatonic, which fits the B♭7 harmony and the key of the song quite well. Incidentally, the first measure could just be analyzed as a B♭6 arpeggio, or a G minor triad, and none of these are wrong. We're just picking one thing it could be to use as fodder for our own improvisations. If there are alternate ways of viewing the melodic material, I'd encourage you to explore those as well.

Moving on, this major pentatonic lick doesn't fit the IV chord (in bars 2 and 5–6) due to the D natural conflicting with the flat seventh of the E♭7. So Rollins just changes this note. But without the second that appears in the following measures this could be heard as an E♭7 arpeggio (without the root) or a G diminished triad. (Again, there are multiple ways of viewing this material; feel free to make different choices than me.)

That's almost the entire thing. There's just the ii–V in bars 9–10. Notice that for the Cm7 Rollins actually plays a descending Cm(maj7) arpeggio, and then for the F7 plays a chromatic lick leading up to the third of the chord (again, my current interpretation).

So, putting it all together, a way of soloing on "Tenor Madness" would be to use those elements in those bars, detailed in Example 1. For Example 2, I've created a solo using these elements. Play through it, and if you don't like it, that's fantastic! Create your own. Improvise with these same concepts and put them in your own voice.



Also, start noticing the elements that make up the melodies of songs you're improvising on. Get into the habit of noticing the various flavors that the composer used and see if you want to incorporate any of them.

For another example, how about Wayne Shorter's "Footprints"? Have any of you noticed that the melody on the Cm7 is dorian scale, but omitting the third? Same thing on the Fm7. Most of us just play the melody "to get it over with" (saxophonist Tim Berne said this at a talk I was fortunate enough to be at) and then do our typical minor blues stuff (or whatever concepts we've been working on). But by incorporating the melody we not only create an improvisation that fits the character of the song, but we also teach ourselves new vocabulary that we might possibly use in other situations.

And it doesn't just have to be about scalar material. Any musical element can be used as fodder to improvise with. How about intervals? Notice how most of the intervals in the "Tenor Madness" melody are thirds? How about the sparse, clipped rhythms, emphasizing the offbeats? So how about playing a solo of mainly thirds, incorporating these rhythms? I gave it a shot, and that's Example 3. In this case I'm using the concepts of the melodic rhythms, and not the specific rhythms. It can also be illuminating (and fun) to improvise with the actual rhythms of the melody.

There's another subtle thing you can do: Emphasize the same notes as the melody. For instance, Rollins is leaning on the D for the B♭7 and the D♭ for the E♭7, the very notes that makes these chords sound like different keys. (One could argue that the B♭ is also emphasized since the licks terminate on that note. That's cool — try using that as well, or both,

or alternating, or whatever else you hear.) The Cm7 leans on the C (perhaps), and the lick on the F7 leads to the A natural. Let's solo using those as our primary tones (see Example 4). Notice that not only did I make those notes the primary ones, but I also used many of the other elements that have been discussed. Someone tuning in on this chorus will likely be able to hear that it's referencing "Tenor Madness," whether used on that song or not. (Wait a minute … you can use the elements of a song *other* than the one you're playing on? That's another clever way of using these ideas.)

But instead of studying my approach, a far better thing to do is to develop your own. Start by asking questions about every musical element you can think of: What's the scalar material being used? Are there any intervalic elements being emphasized? What are the rhythms being used (besides what are the actual rhythms, how about what are the subdivisions? Do they change? What parts of the bar are stressed? Are there any polyrhythmic elements? Are there long tones or staccato, or a mixture?).

What notes are being emphasized, and what are their relationships to the chords and key? What range is the melody using? ("Tenor Madness" is a little more than an octave, whereas Bill Evans' "Waltz For Debby" spans far more.) What are the phrase lengths of the melody? What else intrigues you about this melody?

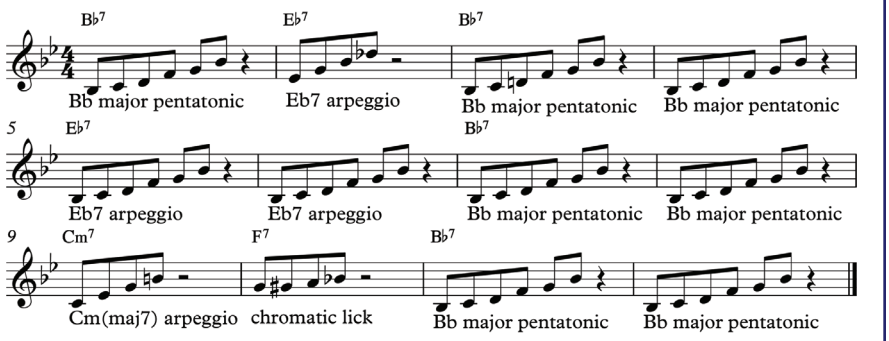
An important thing: Don't get overwhelmed by the above. Rather than trying to examine and improvise around every possible thing you can see in the melody, I'd suggest two main approaches.

First, pick an element you find particularly intriguing in general and explore that, using that aspect as an improvisation focus in a number of tunes. If you're into rhythms, check out and jam on the rhythmic elements of the tunes you're playing. If intervals excite you, do the same with those. As taoists say: Follow your fascination. (And don't be surprised if what fascinates you changes over time.)

Second, take whatever song you're about to play and consider what specifically about that particular melody grabs your attention. It may be a different aspect for different songs, which will mean you will not only approach different songs differently, but since you're taking the bits that appeal most to you, it will also give your improvisations a personal touch. So you'll be finding that combination of playing off the character of the song but also being yourself, which can make for some great jazz.

DB

Example 1



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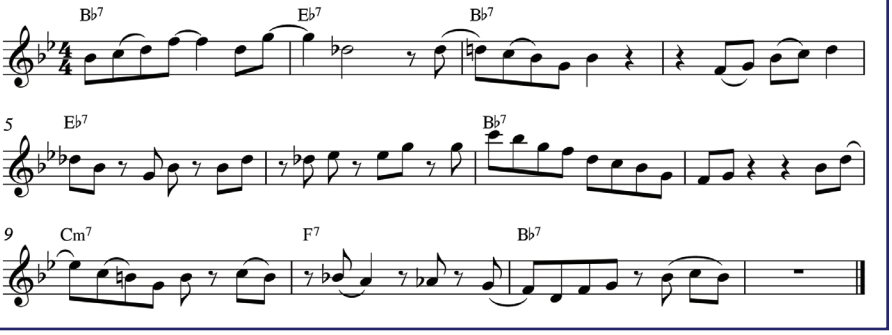
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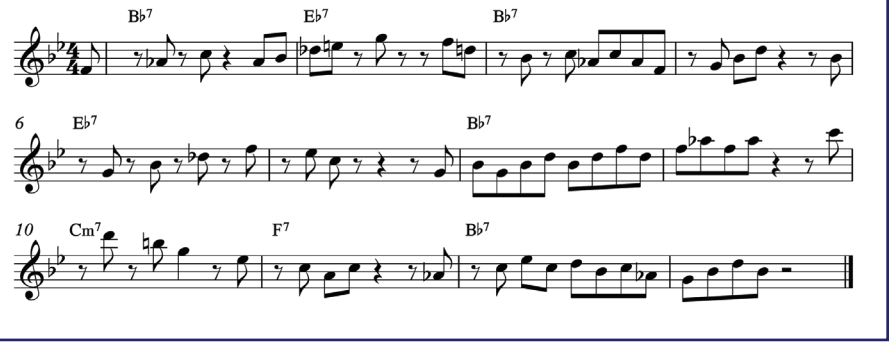
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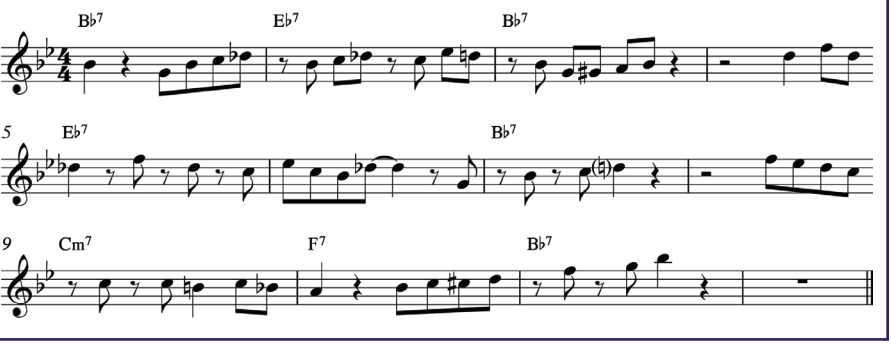

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. He recently released an album of Indian classical music played on the string bass, titled *Border Of Hiranyaloka*. Find out more at jimidurso.bandcamp.com.

COURTESY JEAN-LUC PONTY

Ponty doesn't stick to any sound for more than two bars on this improvisation.

Jean-Luc Ponty's Violin Solo on 'Mirage'

Violinist Jean-Luc Ponty's 1977 album *Enigmatic Ocean* (Atlantic) with guitarists Allan Holdsworth and Daryl Stuermer, keyboardist Allan Zavod, bassist Ralphe Armstrong and drummer Steve Smith hit number 1 on the Billboard jazz chart. Featuring tunes composed, orchestrated and conducted by Ponty, it was successful as a crossover hit, landing at number 35 on the pop charts of the day. Even my uncle had a copy, and he hated anything even remotely jazz-leaning.

A standout track from that recording is "Mirage." Although just a simple vamp in D minor, the reversal of it to iv–i rather than the typical i–iv makes it familiar and yet sets it apart. (There is the short breakdown that interrupts the vamp between soloists.) The high notes on the keyboard part remain the same through the vamp, obscuring the chord changes and giving the groove a hypnotic quality.

Also, there's no written melody. The groove develops, with other instruments joining the keyboard, and then Ponty enters about one minute in with his solo. Since it's in D, with a minor iv chord, the minor pentatonic, aeolian and blues scales could all work, and Ponty makes ample use of each.

But notice how he arranges them. Standard minor pentatonic (which exists within the other two scales) in bars 1–7 and 15 (with the added ninth), 16, 19, 24 (also with added ninth) and 27. Aeolian adds E and B♭, which we hear in measures 9–10, 13–14, 17 and 21–22. The blues scale is produced by adding the flat fifth (A♭) to the minor pentatonic, and appears in measures 8, 11–12, 18, 20 and 23 (but with added ninth).

Two interesting points from this: First, Ponty doesn't stick to any sound for more than two bars. He could have started with one sound and then led our ears through the others (which also might have been a groovy choice) but instead is creating these scalar shifts that keep leading our ear into these different sounds. It's almost as if he's somewhat bucking the hypnotic nature of the backing groove by creating the sense of more variation than there really is (though there is another way of hearing these shifts, which we'll explore later).

Second, sometimes the distinction between the sounds is blurred. As pointed out earlier, there were places where Ponty played minor pentatonic with the ninth added. Should this be lumped in with the minor pentatonic sound, or is it aeolian minus the sixth

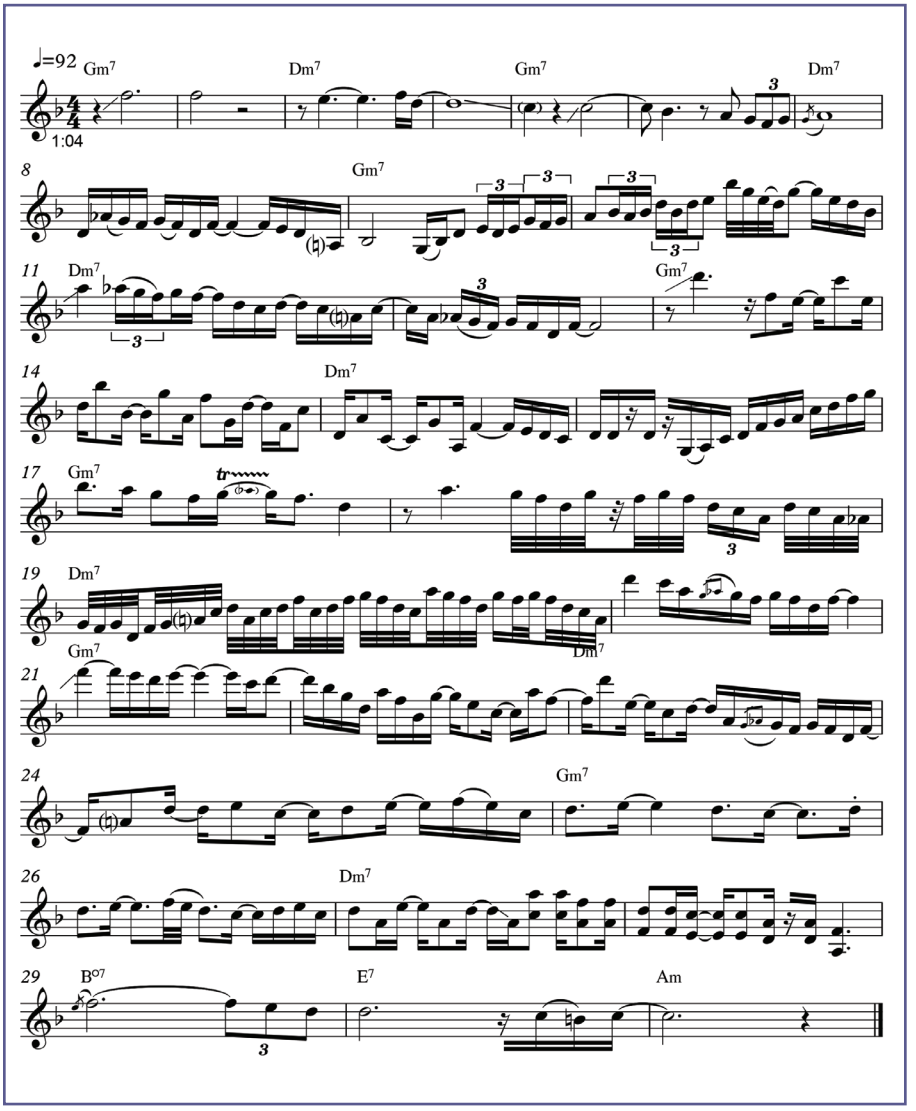
— or is it better to refer to this as something different entirely? (After all, we've seen the use of this scale in previous columns.)

How about some of the fudging I did, like bar 20, which could really be termed minor pentatonic with that decorating trill on the blue note? Does that make it sound like a blues scale or not? So, although Ponty is using these three or four different scale sounds, he's not making much effort to make them sound all that distinct. This is especially true in measure 17 where the flat-five trill is combined with the aeolian sixth, as well as bar 23, where we not only have the flat-five blue note but also the added ninth.

You may notice how Ponty relates these sounds to the chords. B♭ is the flat sixth, the note that defines the scale as aeolian. It is also the minor third of the iv chord (the Gm). Ponty exclusively places this note on the G minor chords, and never on the Dm. He doesn't always include it on the Gm (bars 5–6, 18, 21 and 25–26 lack the B♭), but typically playing it there and never placing it on the Dm bars serves to help define the difference in harmony.

On the flip side, Ponty never uses the blues scale on the Gm. The A♭ might sound hip on the Gm (flat nine and all), but Ponty doesn't play in there (except maybe bar 18, but it's on the final 32nd note of the measure, thus sounding more like part of the following bar), maybe because he wants to create this contrast between the harmonies.

I find it captivating that Ponty has a composition that makes the harmonies sound similar, but improvises in a manner that on one hand makes a distinction between them, but on the other hand keeps the scalar materials similar enough so as not to disturb the mesmeric overlap. **DB**

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. He recently released an album of Indian classical music played on the string bass, titled *Border Of Hiranyaloka*. Find out more at jimidurso.bandcamp.com.

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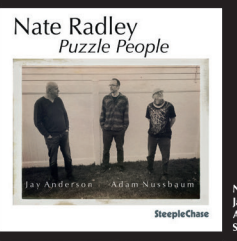

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JodyJazz DV HR Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece

Harmonious Invention, Embedded Bite Plate, Ease of Play & Beautiful Expression

My first impression of the new DV HR series Alto mouthpiece from JodyJazz led directly to a verbal outburst of understated praise — "It plays!" — from this reviewer. That's how enlightening it is to play the DV HR, which is the company's first hard rubber mouthpiece to feature its patented DV design. The piece not only responds with surprising ease, but it's capable of making the alto sing, sob, burn, flutter, whisper and scream with more conviction than I previously thought was even possible. It jump-started my vintage French-made alto back to life and drove me to play for hours. It was an invigorating experience to say the least, one that I shared with some dyed-in-the-wool alto pros who have spent years playing trusty Meyers and Claude Lakeys — and they all found something they loved about the DV HR Alto, too.

The DV HR opens a new chapter for the company's established-DV line, which began life when JodyJazz founder and president Jody Espina first applied the Golden Mean (phi) proportions found in nature to the design of his metal saxophone mouthpieces. With the DV series, Espina created what became one of the most sought-after mouthpieces among jazz and commercial players across the globe. Now, for the first time, those seemingly magical proportions are available in a hard rubber medium.

The patented DV secondary window design, which can be found just below the primary window on the flat undersurface where the table meets the reed, adds mid and low harmonics to the saxophone's sound. The DV HR Alto can deftly cover a full sonic spectrum, from ringing brightness to subdued dark tones — and is capable of supporting a player through long, flighty phrases and the prettiest of ballads. Altissimo notes speak strong and clearly, and feel firmly supported in their sometimes tenuous "slots," which even the most accomplished players can find elusive. The meticulously finished facing curve, which fosters tonal flexibility and a substantial amount of thrust, is also inspired by Golden Mean proportions, as are many other design specifications.

The DV HR Alto is available in size 5, 6, 7 and 8 tip openings. I tried the size 6, aiming for a workable combination of control (of paramount important with any mouthpiece) and power (which lead alto players consistently crave and often require). Outfitting the DV HR Alto with a medium-strength cane reed and a JodyJazz Power Ring ligature (for a precise fit, maximum vibration and boosted harmonics), I was able to achieve a huge sound with an all-enveloping tonal presence. The bell tones of my alto, which I love to milk for subtone coolness and brassy blasts, resonated with a palpable heft that renewed my interest in exploring the low range of my horn. "Imagine what kinds of results a strong, dedicated alto player could get with the larger sizes of the DV HR Alto," I thought to myself, glad I had chosen the easily manageable size 6.

"The DV HR is very free blowing, with all the power you will ever need, along with that big bottom that the DVs are famous for," said Espina. "Now you get all of that in a hard rubber mouthpiece, which gives you the shape that you are used to with the added warmth and beauty of hard rubber. As soon as you play this new mouthpiece, I'm confident that you'll feel that it's the greatest hard rubber mouthpiece you've ever played."

With the new DV HR Alto model, JodyJazz is also introducing its newest bite plate technology. It's the first JodyJazz hard rubber mouthpiece to feature a bite plate that's embedded into the beak of the mouthpiece. (Applying a clear mouthpiece cushion on top of the bite plate is recommended for longevity's sake.) The plate features the iconic "Phi" symbol logo in gold, a characteristic of the classic DV series. It features a gold-plated brass ring on the shank with a distinctive profile that was also created using Golden Mean proportions. The brass ring adds more mass on the shank of the mouthpiece, which results in increased stability, more body in the sound and increased harmonics, according to Espina.

The free-blowing response and crisp note attacks of the DV HR Alto are due to its optimized facing curve and hand-finished tip rail, baffle and table. Each mouthpiece is individually play-tested to ensure consistency and quality. The one I tried arrived by mail ready to wail.

The hard-rubber material of the DV HR Alto makes all the difference in the world. It gives the mouthpiece old-school, comfortable feel with an easily "grippable" shape and size that allows alto players to relax their chops and focus on priorities like tonal shading and executing highly stylized jazz inflections. The hard rubber also introduces more tonal warmth to the overall DV sound.

The JodyJazz DV HR Alto has an MSRP of $450, and it comes with a deluxe mouthpiece pouch. A monumental alto mouthpiece at this price comes around only once or twice in an age, so if you're serious about the instrument, it would be well worth your while to take one for a test-drive and discover its impressive capabilities and capacity for nuanced expression. *—Ed Enright*

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Annie Booth and Alan Baylock, founders of Brava Jazz Publishing

Brava Focuses on Women Composers

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, EFFORTS TO increase gender equity in the world of jazz have made several significant strides.

In 2018, Berklee College of Music founded the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and named NEA Jazz Master Terri Lynn Carrington as the artistic director. In response to the lack of female composers included in *The Real Book* and other published collections of jazz standards, Carrington set out to create a new book of jazz standards written by women. *New Standards* collected 101 compositions by female composers ranging from Lil Hardin Armstrong and Mary Lou Williams to Maria Schneider, Anat Cohen, Esperanza Spalding, Cécile McLorin Salvant and others.

Inspired by Carrington's work and by efforts to increase visibility for women jazz composers at the college and university level — as well as by organizations such as the Jazz Education Network and New Music USA — Brava Jazz Publishing (bravajazz.com) debuted this year with a website providing access to a wide range big band compositions by women.

Co-founded by Alan Baylock, faculty member at the University of North Texas and director of the One O'Clock Jazz Band, and Annie Booth, jazz pianist, composer, arranger and executive director of the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and Composers, Brava Jazz Publishing will serve as a platform for the publication and distribution of big band compositions by an international array of female composers.

"Annie and I met when she came to UNT to do a presentation for the Jazz and Gender Equity Initiative that we started here several years ago," Baylock explained during a recent Zoom conversation with DownBeat. "I invited her back last summer for a jazz combo workshop, and that's when we really began to talk about the concept of creating a website that was focused on big band compositions written by women that could be made available to band directors from middle school through high school, college and the professional level."

Baylock has been directing the One O'Clock Band since 2014, after spending 20 years as the chief arranger for the Airmen of Note jazz ensemble. For the past several years, he has been working to include more compositions by women in the band's repertoire.

"Our library included charts by Toshiko Akiyoshi and Maria Schneider, but not a lot of other women were represented," he said. "I started doing some sleuthing and checked out websites here and there. It was like a treasure hunt, which was a lot of fun, but not convenient. There just wasn't one place to shop for music written by women for jazz ensembles. I really wanted to find a way to rectify that, and lo and behold, I met Annie. I knew her as a great musician and composer, but she also has this wonderful entrepreneurial spirit and a really solid business background."

Booth has recorded six albums for trio and sextet, leads the Annie Booth Big Band and has extensive experience working with non-profits.

"One of the first things we did was talk to experts in different areas," Booth said. "We got some great advice through conversations with people in the jazz industry, people who are part of both non-profit and for-profit organizations, and people in the music publishing and jazz publishing world. We found information about DEIA [diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility] initiatives, and made sure we covered all our bases."

After laying the foundation for Brava Jazz Publishing, Booth and Baylock moved on to the search for works by composers that could be featured on the website.

"That was the really fun part — finding talented artists writing big band music." Booth said. "We did a lot of brainstorming about who we knew worldwide. Then we began to discover new names to us — talented women who were writing and creating."

The Brava Jazz website, which opened on July 1, features works by 17 composers including jazz pianist Ellen Rowe, Artemis bassist Noriko Ueda, trumpeter Grace Fox, keyboardist Rachel Eckroth, Australian saxophonist Minnie Hill, Diva Jazz Orchestra saxophonist Leigh Pilzer and 16-year-old Skyler Tang (winner of the Essentailly Ellington Big Band Composing and Arranging contest). Initially, 30 compositions for all ability levels will be available on the website for jazz ensemble directors to diversify their set lists — and the number of compositions will continue to expand.

"We're in the process now of re-engraving the charts so they'll have a specific look and font set to give it a Brava Jazz branding," Baylock explained.

"It's great timing for the website to be accessible and up and running in time for school this fall," added Booth.

While all efforts are now focused on getting the Brava Jazz Publishing website up and running, Booth and Baylock are also looking ahead to additional efforts for Brava.

"We've already seen interest from female composers contacting us after finding out about Brava Jazz," said Booth. "And that's something we're excited about — expanding the vision of women composers and recognition for them as we grow."

"This is what we consider phase one — publishing music," Baylock added. "We're hoping that additional phases will expand the concept. We have some big ideas — potentially including a Brava Jazz Orchestra that tours and records, and some other exciting things. But this is what we're initially focused on: getting this music out there to be played and heard."

—Terry Perkins

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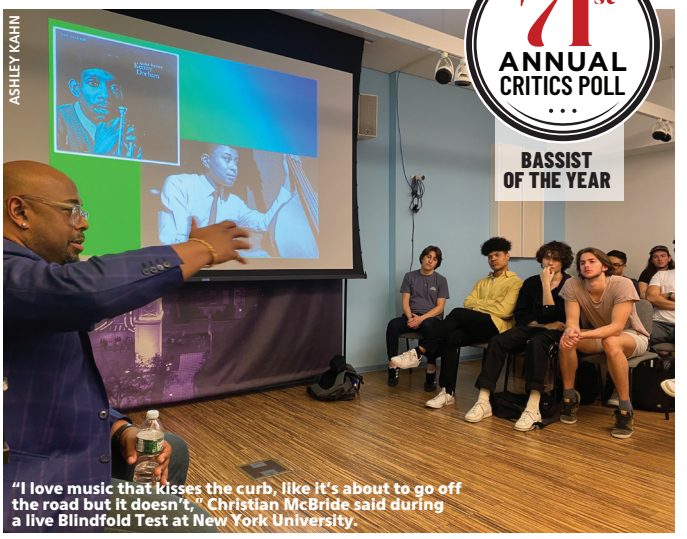

"I love music that kisses the curb, like it's about to go off the road but it doesn't," Christian McBride said during a live Blindfold Test at New York University.

Christian McBride turned 51 this May 31 and is still pushing far beyond what many might consider conventional career bandwidth. In addition to touring regularly with multiple groups (including a promising new unnamed quintet) and recording on a wide variety of projects, he hosts NPR's *Jazz Night in America* and Sirius XM's *The Lowdown*, to serve as artistic director for the Newport Jazz Festival and artistic advisor to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, and is now spokesperson for Qobuz, the high-end streaming service. This Blindfold Test was hosted by New York University's Jazz Studies program, with more than 30 students attending.

Roy Hargrove

"The Joint" (*The RH Factor–Hard Groove*, Verve, 2002) Roy Hargrove, trumpet; Chalmers Alford, guitar; Bobby Sparks, electric piano, organ; Bernard Wright, keyboards; Pino Palladino, bass; Jason Thomas, drums; Daniel Moreno, percussion; Butter, drum programming.

Roy has so many clones. Everybody that came after took a little of Roy for themselves, especially playing stuff like this. That whole period between like '98 and 2001 the Young Lion generation, en masse, got funky. Jazz is the second music of our lives. The first music of our lives is soul and rhythm-and-blues. Dare I say it, but John Coltrane was not a part of my bone marrow as much as James Brown was. Is Pino playing bass? When Pino started playing classic electric bass, people thought, "Oh, we forgot how big and fat the bass sounds without it being popped and slapped." Pino made it cool not to slap. 5 stars.

Terri Lyne Carrington

"Continental Cliff" (*New Standards, Vol. 1*, Candid, 2022) Nicholas Payton, Milena Casado, trumpet; Anabel Gil Diaz, flute; Veronica Leahy, bass clarinet; Kris Davis, piano; Linda May Han Oh, bass; Carrington, drums.

Killer. I love music that kisses the curb, like it's about to go off the road but it doesn't. The interaction is incredible. Can you start that from the beginning one more time? A couple of names come to mind. [*afterwards*] This rightfully won a Grammy. I think there's a modern jazz standard not as in song but the way that people interact. TLC is not just a great drummer but also a great producer. I'm not sure I would have figured out it was Terri — I know her feel better when she's swinging. The first time I heard Linda play was maybe 15 years ago in the Monk competition. I remember Charlie Haden in particular was like, "Hey, who's that? She's bad!" We all heard that it was only a matter of time before she would blow up. Linda's taken care of much business. 5 stars.

Sonny Rollins

"We Kiss In A Shadow" (*East Broadway Run Down*, Impulse, 1966) Rollins, tenor saxophone; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

"We Kiss In A Shadow," *East Broadway Run Down*. Elvin and, of course, Sonny give it away, and the recording quality — Rudy Van Gelder. I love Jimmy Garrison especially in a setting like this. He came along in the time when a lot of bass players were breaking out of strict time-keeping rules. 5 stars, plus.

Emmet Cohen

"Pitter Panther Patter" (*Future Stride*, Mack Avenue, 2021) Cohen, piano; Russell Hall, bass.

It's "Pitter Panther Patter" by Duke Ellington, originally recorded by Duke with Jimmy Blanton. Obviously they both can play, and had that been a lot slower I think I would have enjoyed it more. [*afterwards*] When you're young and you're hungry, you eat too fast. Both of these guys on their respective instruments are two of my favorites. In about 10 more years they're going to play that again and it's going to be extra killin'. 4 stars — I only subtracted one star because of the tempo.

Kenny Dorham

"Blue Spring Shuffle" (*Quiet Kenny*, New Jazz, 1959) Dorham, trumpet; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Art Taylor, drums.

This is Paul Chambers — this right here. I just know his touch. Definitely from somewhere between 1958 and '61. This is not "Whistle Stop"? [*afterwards*] I had the right trumpet player but the wrong album. That's one of my heroes there, Chambers and Ray Brown and Ron Carter, all cut from that same Blanton/Pettiford cloth, everything just pitch- and beat-perfect. All the notes get their full value. 5 stars.

Donald Byrd

"The Emperor" (*Ethiopian Knights*, Blue Note, 1971) Byrd, trumpet; Harold Land, tenor saxophone; William Henderson, piano; Joe Sample, organ; Don Peake, Greg Poree, guitars; Wilton Felder, bass; Ed Greene, drums.

My first reaction was to guess who the trumpet player is. Donald Byrd? I'm used to hearing vocals on a lot of his funk records. [*afterwards*] I remember this, but I don't know this record that well. That's Wilton Felder. Almost every record that came out of L.A. in the late '60s through the mid-'80s, it was all Felder. 5 stars.

Rosa Passos & Ron Carter

"Por Causa de Você" (*Entre Amigos*, Chesky, 2001) Passos, vocal; Carter, bass.

I have no idea who that is but I enjoyed it very, very much. I love the vulnerability of it all. There's an obvious bond there. This was not a session that was phoned in. Please hip me to this. [*afterwards*] I'm not used to hearing Ron like that — natural, just in a room without the pickup. The instrument sounds how it looks: big, beautiful, wooden. That was absolutely gorgeous. 5 stars.

Endea Owens and the Cookout

"Love Cynical" (*Tiny Desk Concert*, NPR.com, 2022) Giveton Gelin, trumpet; Jeffery Miller, trombone; Zoe Obadia, alto saxophone; Jonathan Thomas, piano; Owens, bass; Lee Pearson, drums.

Pull it, baby, pull it! She is not scared of the bass, man. I love her. She has so much enthusiasm. I did a residency at Michigan State like 10 years ago, and I first met Endea. She had a lot of questions, and I really enjoy musicians who, as opposed to saying it's hard figuring out where my place is in the artistic world, they're like, "I don't care where my place is — I just love playing." That's where Endea is coming from. Definitely 5 stars. **DB**

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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